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THE WORKERS' (COMMUNIST) PARTY  
AND  
AMERICAN TRADE UNIONS

BY

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TO THE MEMORY OF  
MY FATHER

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## PREFACE

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This monograph had its origin in an investigation carried on by the author while a member of the Economic Seminary of the Johns Hopkins University. The sources of information utilized were the trade-union publications contained in the Johns Hopkins University Library, supplemented by personal interviews with the trade-union officials, with leaders of the Workers' Party, and with the management of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad.

The author wishes to express his sincere appreciation of the assistance he received, at every stage of his inquiry, from Professor J. H. Hollander and from Professor G. E. Barnett.

D. M. S.

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# THE WORKERS' (COMMUNIST) PARTY AND AMERICAN TRADE UNIONS

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## INTRODUCTION

The movement known as Left Wing Unionism first began in the United States about sixty years ago. The German radicals at that time tried to win over the English-speaking unions to independent political action. Becoming impatient with the lack of response to their efforts, they seceded from the existing unions and established unions of their own.

Left Wing Unionism since that time has followed two policies—boring from within and the formation of dual unions. In accordance with the first, the adherents of Left Wing Unionism stay within the existing labor organizations and endeavor to influence their actions either by propaganda or by the capture of offices. The second policy involves the organization of separate unions, established either by secession from the existing unions, or independently because they have been refused, or did not want admission to, the existing unions. It must be understood that there are two kinds of dual unionism, the ideologic or philosophic, which differs from the existing unionism on a point of principle, and the opportunist, which bases its opposition on practical considerations. Only the first type of dual unionism can be claimed by the Left Wing. It must not be concluded, however, that all ideologic dual unions are necessarily radical. This happens to be the case in this country, where the regular labor movement is conservative. In Europe the reverse is true.

In the 1880's, the radicals, who by that time included other immigrants besides the Germans, particularly the Jews, ceased the formation of independent unions and commenced the process of boring from within, in an endeavor to get control of the Knights of Labor and its newly-organized rival, the

American Federation of Labor. They failed completely. In 1895 they were defeated in both organizations, and the radicals themselves divided into two camps. The faction advocating dual unionism remained with the Socialist Labor Party, and the faction committed to boring from within broke away in 1901 and formed the present Socialist Party. Somewhat later, in 1905, various radical unions united to form the Industrial Workers of the World, and this organization in turn split up three years later to found what became known as The Workers' International Industrial Union. The former disdained political action, but the latter endorsed the Socialist Labor Party.

From about 1908, the Socialist Party made rapid headway, actually winning some of the largest unions in the American Federation of Labor to socialism. One-third of the delegates to the annual conventions voted with the socialists. In 1912, Max C. Hayes, the Socialist candidate for president of the Federation, received 5,073 votes as against 11,974 for Gompers.<sup>1</sup>

Then came the war, and the Socialist Party was broken. Its anti-war attitude caused its isolation, and the Communist split weakened it further. The membership fell off from 104,822 in 1919 to 11,019 in 1922.<sup>2</sup> The Socialists gave up their policy of militant boring from within, and sought to win the confidence of the American Federation of Labor administration. They adopted a policy of gentle propaganda. On the other hand, the Communists made an aggressive attempt to capture the unions.<sup>3</sup>

The Workers' Party and the closely allied Trade Union Educational League are organizations of American communists. The Workers' Party, the successor to the principles of the Communist Party of America,<sup>4</sup> was formed at a con-

<sup>1</sup> American Federation of Labor Proceedings, 1912, pp. 354-355.

<sup>2</sup> American Labor Year Book, 1923-1924, p. 125; 1921-1922, pp. 392-407.

<sup>3</sup> For the above information the author is indebted chiefly to the work by David J. Saposs, entitled, *Left Wing Unionism*.

<sup>4</sup> The Communist Party continued a secret existence. In August, 1922, it held a convention in the woods near Brigman, Mich., which

vention held in New York City in December, 1921, by communists who had been expelled from the Socialist Party, together with other left wing elements. At the Second National Convention, which met in New York in December, 1922, a program was adopted which was approved without change by the Third Convention of the Workers' Party held in Chicago, its national headquarters, from December 30, 1923, to January 2, 1924.

In its first attempts to gain control of the American labor unions the Communists followed a policy of penetration through propaganda and secured the support of various progressive elements. Later, however, in 1923, when Communism became the aggressive left wing opposition, it aroused bitter opposition in the unions; and the conservative and opportunist socialist leaders began to oppose any further endorsements of amalgamation and other "Communist" policies. The Trade Union Educational League lost the support of the progressive and opportunist radicals whose fundamental views differed widely from those of the League, and the so-called period of "peaceful isolation" began.

In the second period the Communists attempted to gain control of the unions through an active participation in the union elections. They either supported the anti-administration candidates, as in the Machinists' and Furriers' unions,<sup>5</sup> or nominated candidates from their own ranks, as in the Miners', Carpenters', and Ladies' Garment Workers' unions.<sup>6</sup> The conservative labor leaders were targets for more and more vehement attacks. "Officialdom" was accused either of betraying or of not efficiently serving the interests of the membership.<sup>7</sup> The establishment of democracy in the unions, particularly the direct election of all officials, including paid officers, was looked upon as a means of breaking the grip of the

was raided by State and Federal authorities. On April 7, 1923, the Communist Party voted to dissolve, but authorized the Workers' Party, when desirable, to adopt the name of the Communist Party of America.

<sup>5</sup> See below, pp. 21, 79.

<sup>6</sup> See below, pp. 35, 54, 97.

<sup>7</sup> See below, pp. 10, 12, 29, 42.

officials upon the unions. This demand was particularly emphasized in the United Mine Workers and in the Carpenters' union.<sup>8</sup>

The officials in a number of unions retaliated by expelling members of the Trade Union Educational League and of the Workers' Party.<sup>9</sup> The grounds assigned for the expulsion were that the League was a dual union and that Communism was hostile to unionism. The basis for this allegation lay in the policies of the Communists. The League has regularly followed the plan of establishing "nuclei" of members who are pledged to follow its instructions and those of the Workers' Party. These "nuclei" were instructed to carry on an obstinate fight in the factories and work-shops against the members of other parties, including Socialist and labor parties. At general meetings of the labor organization, members of the Communist faction were to act and vote as a unit on all questions, and members disobeying this regulation were to be disciplined.<sup>10</sup> The resulting conflict was thus the outcome of dual allegiance. Presentation of the Communist point of view need not have destroyed the unity of the unions. Division occurred when a union decided upon a policy, only to find a portion of its members pledged to the conflicting program of an outside organization which was seeking to obtain control over the union. This dual allegiance thus led to misunderstanding, factional warfare and personal animosity.

Checked by the expulsion of its adherents, the League redoubled its efforts, and supplemented its propaganda with vigorous contests for union control. Communist participation in elections became more assiduous and attacks upon union "officialdom" more vitriolic. "The League," said William Z. Foster, "must give organized expression to the revolutionary will of the membership . . . the era of passing resolutions to have them thrown into the waste basket by sneering and stupid officials is passed; the era of action is at hand."

<sup>8</sup> See below, pp. 35, 56.

<sup>9</sup> See below, pp. 10, 31.

<sup>10</sup> International Press Correspondence, Vienna, Feb. 27, 1924.

The league must "drive them from the office, or, when this is not achieved, teach them obedience to the will of the progressive membership."<sup>11</sup>

The program of the League thus gradually and by force of circumstances developed from a policy of peaceful penetration to a struggle for outright control of the union machinery. The conflict by 1924 had reached the point where no quarter was given. The struggle, as we shall see in the following chapters, is now (1927) tensest in the needle trades, the stronghold of opportunist radicalism. The battle centers in the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, and in the Furriers' Union,<sup>12</sup> but the other needle trade unions have by no means escaped. The Communists singled out for expulsion have been of course the leaders, especially those who have been elected to official position. As a rule the supporters of the Communists among the rank and file have not been disturbed. So effective and widespread has the union ban against Communism become that in most unions, as in the Carpenters', Furriers' and the International Ladies' Garment Workers' unions, the Communists have been forced to operate secretly. In June, 1925, Foster admitted that the League had practically been isolated and outlawed by the trade unions. He claimed some gains for the League, but acknowledged that during the past two years its influence had, in certain respects, sensibly diminished. "It had lost 'leadership' and union members were not responding to its slogans as they once did."<sup>13</sup>

In December of the same year Foster admitted that the position of the League in the trade unions had become desperate. A number of unions, including the Carpenters' and the International Ladies' Garment Workers', were insisting that suspected members sign a pledge to the effect that they would not affiliate with, or give support, assistance, or comfort

<sup>11</sup> William Z. Foster, "The Next Task of the Left Wing," in *The Labor Herald*, Sept., 1924.

<sup>12</sup> See below, Chapters V and VI.

<sup>13</sup> Foster, "Party Industrial Methods and The Structure," in *The Workers' Monthly*, June, 1925.

to, the League or any kindred organization.<sup>14</sup> Foster advised the Communists to avoid signing such pledges if possible, but to sign the pledge and deny membership in the League rather than to be expelled from the union.<sup>15</sup> It is apparent, however, that the signing of such a pledge renders a member almost useless for the purpose of the League, for thereafter the exhibition of the slightest tendency towards Communism will render him subject to expulsion for the violation of his pledge. To stay in the union and serve the League appears to be impossible.

The League, checked by the union expulsion policy, did not abandon all work in the unions, but turned to the organization of shop and factory "nuclei" as the best means of extending its influence. Foster, speaking for the League, informed its members that they must give their attention to this work in order to break through their isolation. Shop nuclei would help them to take the "leadership and initiative in all sorts of strike movements," and enable them to sweep large numbers of workers into the union. Wherever opposition to the union administration was found, the members of the League were to stimulate it and "lead it against our central enemies, the reactionary bureaucracy controlling the unions."<sup>16</sup> Isolated though the League members were in the trade unions, they must not give up their work. They must aid in setting up "united front opposition tickets to the administration candidates in all local unions, international unions, and central labor council elections, except in such cases, of course, where we are strong enough to make a substantial showing with our own revolutionary candidates." This program of the League, which closely followed the outline furnished by the Communist International, continues until the present time to be the Communists' plan for penetration into the trade unions.

The present monograph is an attempt to study from various

<sup>14</sup> See below, pp. 33, 90.

<sup>15</sup> Foster, "Drive Against Left Wing in Trade Unions," in *The Daily Worker*, Dec. 5, 1925.

<sup>16</sup> James O'Neal, *American Communism*, 188.

points of view the vigorous campaign of propaganda conducted by the Workers' Party in a number of American trade unions. As a basis for this study six trade unions were selected by the author as those in which the Workers' Party and the Trade Union Educational League have been able to gain greatest influence and recruit most followers. These unions are: The International Association of Machinists, the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, the United Mine Workers, the International Fur Workers, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, and the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union.

The present study is devoted to the methods employed in this movement, the obstacles encountered, and the degree of success attained. The first six chapters deal separately with the above-mentioned unions. The material thus developed is brought together in the last chapter, in order to appraise the policies and tactics of the Workers' Party and the degree of its success.



## CHAPTER I

## THE MACHINISTS' UNION

The establishment in Philadelphia, on March 2, 1859, of the Grand Union of Machinists and Blacksmiths of North America<sup>1</sup> marked the first successful attempt in the United States to organize machinists on a large scale. Later the name of the organization was changed to the International Union of Machinists and Blacksmiths of North America, and still later to the Machinists and Blacksmiths Union of North America.<sup>2</sup> In 1862 the organization began the publication of a monthly journal. By 1874 the union had 28,000 members, but the business depression which swept over the country in 1874 adversely affected the union, and its membership was absorbed by the Knights of Labor.<sup>3</sup> By August, 1877, the Machinists and Blacksmiths Union was practically extinct, although it continued to exist nominally for some time thereafter.

On May 5, 1888, nineteen machinists employed in a railway shop at Atlanta, Georgia, organized a union, calling it the United Machinists and Mechanics Engineers.<sup>4</sup> This union grew, and many local unions were organized. In 1889 the name of the union was changed to the National Association of Machinists, and later, in 1891, the name was again changed to the International Association of Machinists, this latter change of name being made so as to indicate inclusion in the union of Mexico and Canada.

In 1895 the Machinists affiliated themselves with the American Federation of Labor. The Machinists' Union grew steadily until in 1920 its membership had reached 330,880. After that year it began to decrease in numbers; in 1921 the mem-

<sup>1</sup> Machinists and Blacksmiths Journal, III, 564.

<sup>2</sup> Proceedings of the 1874 Convention of Machinists and Blacksmiths Union, 88.

<sup>3</sup> Studies in American Trade Unionism, edited by J. H. Hollander and G. E. Barnett, 113.

<sup>4</sup> Machinists' Monthly Journal, 1924, p. 494.

bership was 273,600 and in 1922 it had fallen to 180,900. The railroad strike of 1922 further decreased its membership. Over 80,000 machinists participated in this strike, and after the strike was settled in 1923 the Machinists' Union was left with a membership of only 97,300.<sup>5</sup> The membership of the union at the beginning of the year 1926 was 71,400.<sup>6</sup>

During the period that marked the rapid decrease in its membership the union was split into two factions by a series of clashes between the supporters and opponents of the Workers' Party. The first clash centered around the "Toledo case," so-called because the affair originated in 1923 in Toledo, Ohio, in Toledo Lodge No. 105. Three members of Toledo Lodge No. 105 preferred charges against seven other members, in accordance with the rule laid down in the Machinists' constitution. The charges were to the effect that these seven members were also members of the Workers' Party and the Trade Union Educational League, organizations, it was asserted, which were antagonistic in nature to the Machinists' Union; that they had organized a local branch of the Trade Union Educational League; that they had advocated industrial unionism; that they had preferred false charges for the purpose of creating dissension in Toledo Lodge No. 105, thereby weakening it.<sup>7</sup>

When the President of Lodge No. 105 brought the accused to trial, according to the provisions of the constitution, before a committee of the local union, all the accused were found guilty as charged. It was recommended by the committee which tried the case that they be fined fifty dollars each, and that they be deprived of all rights and privileges as members of the Machinists' Union for a period of one year. It further recommended that before full rights should be restored to them, these men should furnish satisfactory assurance that they had severed their connection with the Workers' Party

<sup>5</sup> American Labor Year Book, 1924, p. 49.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 1926, p. 86.

<sup>7</sup> Proceedings of the Executive Sessions of the Seventeenth Convention of the International Association of Machinists, 21-22.

and the Trade Union Educational League. The members of the union voted that the seven members were guilty, and accepted the recommendations of the committee as to the penalty.

The defendants appealed from this decision to the International President, who sustained the decision of the local union. They then appealed to the General Executive Board. The Board found them guilty as charged, and upheld the action of the International President. It, however, decided to reinstate the defendants to good standing at any time, within thirty days following the decision, that they could give assurance that they had terminated their membership in the Workers' Party and the Trade Union Educational League.

The second clash between the two opposing elements in the union was the controversy over the so-called "Baltimore and Ohio Plan." This Plan which involves union coöperation in management, was bitterly opposed by the workers adhering to the left wing, the Workers' Party leading. The opposition declared that this "infamous Baltimore and Ohio Plan," as they called it, which had originated in 1922 by O. S. Beyer, Jr., an efficiency engineer who had worked in the arsenals of the government during the war, had been taken up by President William H. Johnston of the Machinists' Union as a means of getting the union into the good graces of the railroad corporations, thereby avoiding such unpleasant things as strikes, which interfered with the steady flow of per capita tax into the union treasury.<sup>8</sup> The opposition further asserted that at the Glenwood shops,<sup>9</sup> where the scheme had been in operation for two years, the Machinists' local union had condemned it root and branch. They maintained that the plan was in effect an agreement whereby the union purchased recognition from the railroad management by supplying efficiency engineers who, with the authority of the union, sped up

<sup>8</sup> Class struggle vs. Class Collaboration, by Earl Browder, 9.

<sup>9</sup> The Glenwood shop is very prominent and well known, for it is one of the three major shops of the B. & O. R. R. When fully manned, about 1200 men are employed there. When the plan went into effect it involved about 300.

production, eliminated waste, reduced the cost of production, and at the same time got rid of "undesirable workers" as well as any union working conditions which might hamper or reduce profits.

In support of their contentions the opposition quoted from President Johnston's first public announcement of the coöperative plan, made at a meeting held in the St. Louis Y. M. C. A., and reported in the November 24, 1923, issue of "Labor," a railroad weekly. He said: "The idea underlying our service to the B. & O. may be compared to the idea which underlies the engineering services extended to railroads by large supply corporations which have contracts with these railroads to furnish, let us say, arch-brick, superheaters, stokers, or lubricating oil." The gist of all this, according to the Workers' Party, was that the union had become a supply corporation to the railroad companies, engaging in the business of selling labor just as another corporation may sell lubricants. It competed in the open market in the same way as any other organization selling any other commodity, and engaged to deliver more work at less cost than non-union labor can deliver.<sup>10</sup> The opposition asserted that the effort of the Plan, if extended throughout the railroad industry, would be to eliminate unionism altogether. It was a method by which the railroad management could capture the unions and turn them to profit-making purposes. The Plan, they declared, was a direct competitor of the "company unions," giving promise to the employers of being more effective than such organizations formed by themselves.

In an article entitled "Company Unions and the B. & O. Plan," one of the critics of the Plan explained how the B. & O. Plan changed the labor unions into company unions. He said:

The company unions have the following purposes:

1. To provide regular means of access by employees through their representatives to the employer, and for consultation by the employer with employees through representatives.
2. To avoid interruption of production and to maintain maximum production.

<sup>10</sup> Daily Worker, Dec. 22, 1925.

3. To give employees an opportunity to discuss conditions under which they work and the means of improvement.
4. To further the common interest of the employees and the employer in all matters pertaining to work, organizing and efficiency.<sup>11</sup>

He then compared these avowed purposes with the following statement of principles of the B. & O. Plan, as formulated by Mr. Johnston and Mr. Beyer:<sup>12</sup>

1. Full and cordial recognition of the Federated Shopmen's Unions, as the agents of the employees.
2. Constructive and protective functions in railroad management, along lines laid down by these unions and their spokesmen.
3. Agreement between these unions and the management to cooperate for improved service to the public.
4. Agreement to share fully any subsequent benefits.
5. Perfection of definite administrative machinery to accomplish these purposes.

The Workers' Party contended that the B. & O. Plan contained all the principles of the "open shop" idea. It was argued that the only essential difference between the "company union" plan of the National Association of Manufacturers, which was the open shop movement, and the B. & O. Plan, was that in the latter case the union officials themselves contracted to use the power of the labor union to establish the principles of the open shop.

"The labor union officials," the Workers' Party alleged, "had their own reasons for being anxious to make this kind of a deal with the employers. Their criminal mismanagement of the great strike of 1922-23 had demoralized the unions to such an extent that the officials became alarmed at the danger to their salaries. They had to find a new method of renewing the flow of per capita tax into their treasuries." The Workers' Party declared that the "Open shop" employers were interested in the B. & O. Plan for two reasons. First, because they were experiencing difficulties with their private "company unions"; and second, because they realized the need of an additional "line of defense" inside the workers'

<sup>11</sup> Open Shop Encyclopedia, 1922.

<sup>12</sup> American Federationist, July, 1925, p. 528.

own organizations, to prevent the "company unions" from being captured by the workers.

In quoting President Daniel Willard of the B. & O. Railroad, who, after two years' experience of the plan, made the following statement, "I believe that it has now been fully demonstrated that the co-operative plan has more than justified itself from many angles," the Workers' Party contended that the reason for President Willard's enthusiasm was that the B. & O., after several lean years, was suddenly realizing rich profits again, directly due to the increased exploitation of the men working under "efficiency engineers" of their own hiring. They asserted that the men themselves, under the B. & O. Plan, had abolished their own protective rules (seniority,<sup>13</sup> etc.), speeded up production, eliminated waste, driven out the less productive workers, receiving in return nothing but "recognition" of their officials, and the same wage as paid by other roads. Meanwhile, they claimed, the operating expenses of the railroad had dropped from 82 per cent. in 1922 to 78 per cent. in 1923, while net profits increased from 23 to 42 millions. All this was of course a great victory for the B. & O. Plan over the company unions. "It had convinced the employers that it was even better for profits than the 'open shop' and not a bit more dangerous to capitalism."

Another definite result of the B. & O. Plan, according to the Workers' Party, was loss of employment and increase in lay-offs. They claimed that in May, 1925, the railroad announced a reduction of the shop forces, and that this action was repeated in August, 1925, when 7,000 men were laid off.<sup>14</sup>

At the Seventeenth Convention of the International Association of Machinists held in 1924 in Detroit, Lodge No. 122 of Winnipeg, Manitoba, the majority of whose members were

<sup>13</sup> An investigation made by the writer to determine whether the seniority rules were abolished, showed that the rules are kept strictly according to the agreement between the B. & O. R. R. and the Federated Shop Crafts.

<sup>14</sup> The writer examined the figures in the reports sent by the B. & O. R. R. to the Interstate Commerce Commission, and found that the difference between the shop forces in July, 1925, and August, 1925, was only 61 men. In May, 1925, 869 men were laid off.

supporters of the program of the Workers' Party, announced that it regarded the B. & O. Plan as "a sugar-coated pill, which contained within itself the elements for the destruction of all the principles for which the organization had stood and fought in the past." The delegates of this lodge stated that "under the beautiful B. & O. plan, we good trade unionists do our own speeding up."<sup>15</sup> This lodge also condemned the Plan as being inconsistent with the principle of the class struggle which was set forth in the preamble to its constitution. This principle it was resolved to maintain, as a bulwark against the encroachments of the employing class.

Lodge No. 79, of Seattle, Washington, which was also under the influence of the Workers' Party, denounced the B. & O. Plan, declaring it to be an employers' scheme which would undermine the very foundations of the Machinists' Union. This lodge maintained that the plan would destroy the militant attitude and the vigilance of the members of the Machinists' Union in their dealings with the employing class, their natural enemy. "By the victimization of its most active members, the union will be, and is being used to forward class collaboration, which is sure to result in more damnably intolerable conditions."<sup>16</sup>

Delegate Otis, the delegate of Lodge No. 536 of Glenwood, where the Plan was first introduced, strenuously attacked the policy of the B. & O. Railroad. He claimed that the men in the Glenwood shops were dissatisfied with the conditions existing in those shops. He complained that up to the time of the Detroit convention the men had gotten nothing in the way of an increase at the very time when, according to reports, the B. & O. Railroad made 42 million dollars for the year 1923, more than had ever been made in one year before. The B. & O. Plan was, in the view of his lodge, simply a plan whereby the working force would be reduced. An engineer employed at the expense of the union itself would teach the

<sup>15</sup> Proceedings of the 17th Convention of the International Association of Machinists, 233.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 238-239.

men how to produce faster, with the natural result of a reduction in the number employed.<sup>17</sup>

On the other hand, the annual convention of the shopmen of the B. & O. System Federation No. 30, held in Philadelphia in May, 1924, adopted a resolution supporting the coöperative program, and recommending it to all labor unions. The resolution enumerated the benefits which had accrued to the workers under the plan as follows: Greater participation in management; improved working conditions; fewer violations of agreements; less grievances, and a quicker and fairer adjustment of those grievances which did come up; more and steadier employment, and consequently greater yearly earnings; more effective union organization; closer craft coöperation; safer and more sanitary conditions in the shops; and better protection of rights. President William H. Johnston of the International Association of Machinists and the leaders of the shop crafts have expressed the view that the relationship resulting from the B. & O. Plan exerts a tremendous influence against strikes. Johnston said: "Strikes and friction between unions and management are a transitory phase in the relationship, which will tend to disappear with the extension of coöperation."

From the shopmen's strike of 1922 until 1927, sixty-two American railroads established their own company unions of shopmen. While continuing to negotiate agreements with independent unions representing the men in their transportation divisions, corresponding agreements with the shopmen have been negotiated by these roads with their own company unions. When the Baltimore and Ohio took the leadership in settling with the striking shopmen and subsequently accepted the union-management coöperation plan brought forward by the Federated Shop Crafts, many railroad executives commented upon "Willard's folly" in capitulating to the unions and "turning his shops over to them." As a matter of fact, the unions gained small advantages in the settlement of the strike. The strike was already lost, and the unions

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 241.

were glad to make a settlement under which union recognition was retained. On those roads which refused to settle on the basis of the Baltimore agreement and organized their own company unions, recognition was lost to the independent unions.

The shopmen's strike of 1922 cost the Machinists, the union in which the largest numbers of the shopmen are organized, more than \$1,700,000. The total cost of installing coöperation in the forty-five Baltimore and Ohio shops was a little more than \$7,000. Yet the plan of coöperation gained permanent recognition for the shopmen's unions and gave them new functions on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, whereas the strike resulted in the withdrawal of recognition by sixty-two railroads. The comparison of costs and of benefits has served to impress upon leaders of the railway unions the superiority of the new over the old trade union methods.<sup>18</sup>

The struggle between the two factions in the union reached a crisis during the Seventeenth Convention of the Machinists, which was held in Detroit, Michigan, from September 15 to September 27, 1924. The delegates were split into two parties, one supporting Johnston and his group, and the other made up of the followers of the Workers' Party and the Trade Union Educational League. The convention, as a result, was one of the bitterest in the history of the International Association. Controversies between the two groups centered on three issues: whether the La Follette movement should be supported; amalgamation; and the Toledo case.

The first note of discord was struck when the committee on resolutions reported and moved the adoption of a substitute resolution for Resolution No. 1 which had been proposed by the General Executive Board. The substitute resolution denounced the Democratic and Republican parties for rejecting the proposals of organized labor, and for nominating Coolidge,

<sup>18</sup> This program of union coöperative management now applies to almost 70,000 employes, 22,000 of which are employed by the B. & O., 10,000 by the Chesapeake and Ohio, 24,000 by the Canadian National, and 14,000 by the Chicago and Northwestern (Proceedings of the 15th Convention of Railway Carmen, 202).

Dawes and Davis, all enemies of labor and supporters of "Special Privilege." It endorsed La Follette and Wheeler for President and Vice-President, respectively, praising them for their "fidelity to basic American principles and devotion to the fundamental rights of labor," and pledged support to the Conference for Progressive Political Action, which was organized to support the La Follette Movement.<sup>19</sup>

In the debate which followed, delegate Otis said that in the judgment of his lodge, La Follette was not representing the working class in the election, and that La Follette had refused to have anything to do with the Farmer-Labor Party convention held in St. Paul on June 17, 1924, on the ground that this convention was controlled by the Communists. La Follette, Otis said, was merely an independent candidate appealing for the support of Democrats and Republicans who were dissatisfied with Davis and Coolidge. Otis declared that his lodge considered that La Follette's program had absolutely nothing constructive in it as far as Labor was concerned.<sup>20</sup> Delegate Emme of Lodge No. 459, of St. Paul, Minnesota, warned the convention against the La Follette movement from the point of view of the class struggle. He said that the left wing members, for whom he was spokesman, intended to reorganize the Machinists' Union on the economic field, but that they did not believe that La Follette would be a "saviour." "If you vote for La Follette and fail," he said, "that is not the last word in organization. After that failure, it is possible that we will organize ourselves as labor and by labor."<sup>21</sup> Delegate Garner of Lodge No. 209, of Hammond, Indiana, announced that his lodge had not endorsed La Follette and Wheeler. He said that these men did not admit that there was a class struggle in the United States, and that his lodge held the opinion that the La Follette program contained nothing that would be significant to the working class.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Proceedings of the 17th convention of the International Association of Machinists, 15-16.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

The substitute for resolution No. 1 was finally adopted, and the International Association of Machinists in this way pledged itself to support La Follette and Wheeler in the Presidential campaign. The left wing group then introduced resolution No. 3, presented by Lodge No. 79, of Seattle, Washington. This resolution vigorously criticised the activities of the officers of the Grand Lodge. It charged the leaders of the Machinists' Union with approving of, and supporting the capitalistic World War (1914-1918), denounced them for "begging favors from capitalist politicians for a mere sop of reform, which, if obtained, cannot, nor ever will cure the evils afflicting the downtrodden and oppressed," and repudiated any action taken by the International officials in dictating the policy and politics of the members. On recommendation of the committee on resolutions, resolution No. 3 was defeated, the vote being 107 to 44.

Resolutions favoring the formation of a political labor party were introduced by the left wing. The committee on resolutions reported unfavorably, and after much discussion, the delegates voted again 107 to 44 to reject the proposal.

The second important debate in the convention was in connection with amalgamation. Lodges 79, 235, 330, 337 and 119 presented a resolution favoring the amalgamation of all metal trades organizations into one union, covering the entire metal industry. The resolution declared that the employers were unitedly carrying on a vicious campaign against the unions, and that the latter were unable to make effective resistance because of the division along trade lines.<sup>23</sup> The committee on resolutions submitted a substitute for all the resolutions dealing with the subject of amalgamation. This resolution set forth that the Machinists had advocated amalgamation of all metal trades unions since 1919, but that the other metal trades unions had rejected all proposals, and instructed the officers to continue their efforts to secure amalgamation.

A very heated and lengthy discussion followed. Those who

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

supported the recommendation of the committee explained that, while they were in favor of amalgamation, they believed that the officers and members of the International Association had already done everything in their power to bring it about. They felt that amalgamation was not being delayed, prevented, or opposed by the officers of the other metal trades unions, but was being fought by the members, the rank and file of these organizations; and they thought that the best solution of the problem was a campaign of education among the members of those unions, upon whom it was impossible to force amalgamation against their will. They reminded the delegates that many of the members of the other unions thought that the entire plan of amalgamation was merely an attempt on the part of the Machinists to absorb them; and that any action towards the desired results was impossible while that spirit existed.

The delegates who opposed the recommendation of the committee and supported the original resolutions argued that the rank and file of the other metal trades unions, as of the Machinists, were overwhelmingly in favor of amalgamation, but that their officers had prevented them from taking any definite action. The members of all the metal trades unions, they maintained, really wanted industrialism, or organization along industrial lines. The delegates, by a vote of 107 to 42, adopted the recommendation of the committee.

The La Follette and amalgamation business having been finished, the Workers' Party faction moved the convention for a reversal of all previous decisions in the Toledo case. An investigating committee was appointed, which presented to the convention both a majority and a minority report. The majority report, signed by six members of the investigation committee, recommended that the decision of the General Executive Board be reversed, that the fines be remitted, and that the suspended members be reinstated with full rights. The minority report, signed by four members of the committee, upheld the decision of the General Executive Board.

Delegate Jensen in the debate called attention to the fact

that in the city of Chicago, during the railroad strike of 1922, the members of the Workers' Party and the Trade Union Educational League had cooperated with the union to the utmost in raising funds to carry on that strike, and that largely through the efforts of these two organizations fifteen or twenty thousand dollars were raised.<sup>24</sup> Delegate Emme, a member of the Workers' Party, argued that the Workers' Party was a recognized political organization with a ticket in the field in a number of states; that the Trade Union Educational League was an educational movement; that neither could be regarded as a dual movement, and that both these organizations were strictly working class movements, having nothing to do with employers. He declared that the members of the League were very active members of the International Association of Machinists, that they brought in a large number of new members, and that they constituted a militant group in the labor movement.<sup>25</sup> Secretary Davison argued in support of the decision of the General Executive Board. One hundred and seven delegates voted to sustain the decision of the General Executive Board, and forty-four voted to reverse it.<sup>26</sup>

During the year 1924 it became increasingly evident that there would be a sharp struggle at the next election for the leadership of the Machinists. The opposing factions were headed by President William H. Johnston, and by Vice-President J. F. Anderson. In February, 1925, the circular calling for the election of Grand Lodge officers was issued. Johnston was nominated for President by his own lodge, No. 174, of Washington, D. C., and secured the endorsement of 403 other local lodges. Anderson was nominated for President by lodge No. 308, St. Louis, Missouri, and secured 185 endorsements. Johnston and Anderson each headed a ticket composed of their respective principal supporters. Throughout the campaign both sides urged the members of the union to vote for one of the tickets in full, and not to support, for example, the

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 205.

nominee for president of one faction, and the nominee of the other faction for some other office.

The group supporting Johnston did not announce any definite platform or program. Anderson, likewise, made no definite statement, but three of the other candidates of his faction agreed to certain minimum demands of the Trade Union Educational League. These included: opposition to the "B. & O. Plan"; reinstatement of the expelled militants (a reference to the defendants in the Toledo case), and no further prosecutions of them or any other members of the International Association because of affiliation with the Workers' Party or the Trade Union Educational League; and lastly, support of the proposed amalgamation of the metal trade unions.

The left wing of the Machinists (including those who were members of the Workers' Party or the Trade Union Educational League) supported Anderson and his ticket, in spite of their charges that the Anderson "center" group was inefficient, sluggish, and apathetic. It had no program, they contended, and without the activity of the left wing to spur it on and drive it forward was unable and unwilling to conduct a real struggle for the rank and file of the workers against the bosses. It was fairly clear that their votes were not so much votes for Anderson as votes against Johnston.

The campaign was the bitterest in the history of the union. On March 28, 1925, Anderson published a statement in which he said that having seen how votes were counted in the 1922 election, he feared that all his votes might not be counted in Washington. In June, 1925, the results of the election were published by General Secretary-Treasurer Davison. According to his statement Johnston received 18,021 votes and Anderson 17,076. William Hannan, the only candidate on Anderson's ticket to defeat his opponent, was elected vice-president, having received 17,388 votes.

In July 1925, Anderson published and sent to all the lodges affiliated with the International Association, and to the officers of other labor organizations, a circular entitled "The Story

of the Big Steal." The circular, among other things, directly charged that President Johnston, General Secretary-Treasurer Davison, and certain other International officers had, by fraudulent and unlawful means, manipulated the ballots and tally sheets of the local lodges, so that the will of the membership was not expressed. The circular quoted Secretary Davison as having said: "I will never be defeated so long as I count the votes." The circular asked whether officers who would so betray the membership could be trusted in the settlement of a strike and the handling of the union's funds. The circular also contained a letter to Anderson from Herbert P. Leeman, his official watcher during the counting and tabulation of the election returns. Leeman charged Davison with many irregularities in the counting and with flagrant abuse of his power to throw out illegal ballots. The circular also contained three affidavits by members of a committee of Portsmouth Lodge No. 441, appointed to investigate the voting of its membership for the officers of the Grand Lodge for 1925. The affidavits contained charges of illegal practices in connection with the voting.

On July 20, 1925, President Johnston suspended Anderson from membership in the International Association of Machinists "until such time as he would file a satisfactory apology and retraction with the General Executive Council of the I. A. of M., together with his pledge and promise that he would loyally support the I. A. of M., and that he would not thereafter violate its Constitution or be disloyal to its principles and the purposes for which it was organized."<sup>27</sup> On July 27, 1925, Anderson filed with the General Executive Council his appeal from the order of the International President suspending him from membership in the union. He declared in his appeal that everything he had said in the circular was true. Anderson then solicited sums of money from various local lodges; the "Anderson Square Deal League" was organized, and buttons indicating membership were offered for sale throughout the country. The funds so raised were to be used

<sup>27</sup> Machinists' Monthly Journal, 1925, p. 538.

for securing the opportunity for Anderson to present evidence to substantiate his "Story of the Big Steal."

At the meeting of the General Executive Council in Washington, D. C., September 22, 1925, Anderson read a statement.<sup>28</sup> He charged that Johnston had long desired to remove him from office because he had acquainted the members with existing evils. He denied the right of the Council to sit as judges in his case, because it was pledged to support the International President, and because, having accused him, it was not just that it should try or pass sentence upon him. He denied that the constitution gave the International President the power to suspend him or inflict any other penalty. He declared that Johnston had ignored his accusations, and had ordered him to "shut up" when he dared tell the truth or ask a pertinent question. His alleged offense, he stated, was merely asking the question as to whether men could be trusted with certain responsibilities when they had been proven faithless to others. His statement closed with a declaration of faith in the members of the International Association of Machinists, stating his belief that they would reinstate him with honor as soon as they had an opportunity to act unhampered.

When Anderson had concluded his statement, the Council went into executive session. It appointed a committee to submit recommendations to the Council. Vice-Presidents Fechner, Sommerville and Brown were appointed committee members. They recommended that the order of the International President be sustained, and this recommendation was adopted by the Council. Vice-President Hannon voted against it, on the ground that there was nothing in the constitution of the Machinists that would allow a man's membership to be taken away from him without a fair trial.

On July 29, 1925, Terminal Lodge No. 1154 of Jersey City, N. J., issued a "recall petition of Grand Lodge Officers" proposing the recall "of each and every one of the officers declared elected by General Secretary-Treasurer Davison in

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 541.



his 'Official Circular No. 179' and as it appears on page 345, *Machinists' Monthly Journal*, June 1925." The petition specifically named William H. Johnston, International President; E. C. Davison, General Secretary-Treasurer; and Fred. Hewitt, Editor; their recall was proposed on the specific charges (1) of incompetency; (2) of extravagance and illegal use of funds; (3) of misuse of the *Journal*; (4) of outrageous, contemptible, and morally dishonest conduct during the campaign. As provided in the constitution, the recall petition endorsed by one hundred fifty-two local lodges was sent to the General Secretary-Treasurer. On September 22, 1925, the International President issued an official circular (No. 186), in which he pronounced the recall petition void, on the grounds that it did not fulfil the constitutional requirements for recall petitions, that all the charges against every one of the officers sought to be recalled were general in their nature, and were mere statements of conclusions, and not facts.<sup>29</sup>

The Union remained deadlocked, divided into two political factions of almost equal numbers and strength. In an attempt to bring about some understanding or reconciliation between the two groups, a voluntary committee of about thirty men, representing local lodges, came to Washington in February, 1926, to confer with the members of the Executive Council, which was then in session.<sup>30</sup> For a period of more than two weeks they considered the points at issue, and carefully examined the tally sheets, ballots, containers, and all other material in the hands of the General Secretary-Treasurer which related to the last Grand Lodge election. All agreed that many things had been unwisely and falsely said, that the issuing of circulars attacking the character and integrity of candidates was a most harmful practice, and that a continuation of such practice would ultimately destroy the influence and power of the Machinists in the industrial world. Anderson withdrew his appeal from the decision of the Executive Council suspending him from membership in Lodge No. 308

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 557.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 1926, p. 130.

of St. Louis, Mo. The Executive Council, by a unanimous vote, restored him to full membership in Lodge No. 308, with all the rights and privileges of such membership. The appeal of Lodge No. 1154 from the decision of the International President on its recall petition was also withdrawn. An appeal, signed by both the Executive Council and Anderson, was sent to the membership at large, entreating them to forget all partisan differences, and to cooperate in the fullest manner in carrying out the purposes for which the International Association of Machinists existed.

The Workers' party and the Trade Union Educational League, it was explained, supported Anderson and his ticket in order, if possible, to get rid of Johnston. They did very little to help Anderson after he was suspended, and when the two factions, led by Johnston and Anderson, were reconciled, the members of the Workers' Party and of the Trade Union Educational League were left alone. At present they exert very little influence in the International Association of Machinists.

## CHAPTER II

## THE CARPENTERS' UNION

The story of the origin and growth of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners forms an interesting chapter in the history of American trade unionism. By the middle of the nineteenth century local organizations of carpenters, some of them fairly strong, had arisen in a number of cities. The benefits that would accrue to the individual unions through closer contact with each other appeared obvious, and in 1854, and again in 1867, attempts to federate them were made. Both of these movements failed, but a third effort was to prove successful. The beginning of this third movement was a four-page journal called "The Carpenter," which commenced publication in St. Louis, Missouri, in May, 1881. Three months of agitation by this paper resulted in the calling of a conference, which met in Chicago in August, 1881. The thirty-six delegates who attended the conference represented twelve local unions, with a combined membership of more than 2,000. The meeting proved successful, and on August 12, 1881, The Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America was formed. Under the term "America" the delegates specifically included Canada, as well as the United States.

One powerful local union, which refused at first to affiliate with the national organization, was the United Order of American Carpenters and Joiners, whose membership comprised carpenters in New York City and surrounding towns. In 1888, after mutual concessions, the New York group merged with the Brotherhood to form the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America. By the terms of the merger the New York society was permitted to retain to some degree its own identity.

The United Brotherhood, which was affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, was soon troubled with juris-

ditional disputes with another member of the Federation, the Amalgamated Wood Workers' International Union, composed of wood workers not in the building trades. The Amalgamated was formed in 1895 by a merger of the International Furniture Workers' Union, founded in 1873, and the Machine Wood Workers' International Union, organized in 1890. The Amalgamated and the United Brotherhood clashed repeatedly over the right to organize carpentry shops and mill workers. The dispute continued with increasing intensity, and in 1903, Federation officials tried to secure an amicable adjustment of the differences. This effort failing, the United Brotherhood continued its organization work among cabinet makers and shop craftsmen, and made serious inroads into the membership of the rival union. Between 1909 and 1911 efforts to combine the two organizations were repeatedly made, but none of them were attended with success. Finally, drastic measures were resorted to, and the 1911 convention of the American Federation of Labor ordered the Amalgamated to come to terms with the United Brotherhood, the penalty for non-compliance to be the revocation of its charter. By that time the membership of the Amalgamated was less than at any time in its history. In April, 1912, the Amalgamated merged with the United Brotherhood under an agreement which in effect involved its absorption into the United Brotherhood.

Still another organization of carpenters was in existence throughout this period. Before 1881, when the Brotherhood was founded, the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners of Great Britain had established a branch in America. This branch grew to be a fairly large and successful organization, but was primarily a beneficiary society rather than an aggressive trade union. Because of this its membership was never as large as that of the Brotherhood. In 1890 the Amalgamated Society was chartered by the American Federation of Labor, in spite of the fact that it was clearly dual to the United Brotherhood, which had already received a charter. The story of the United Brotherhood's relations with the

Amalgamated Society is essentially the same as in the case of the Wood Workers. The United Brotherhood, adopting the slogan "One trade, one organization," fought persistently for amalgamation. In this fight it had the support of the Federation, and, later, of the Building Trades Department of the Federation. Repeated efforts to combine the two groups so that the identity and autonomy of each would be preserved were made, but all failed. In 1912 the Amalgamated Society refused to participate in further conferences, and in August of that year the American Federation of Labor revoked its charter. In 1913 a compromise between the Amalgamated Society and the United Brotherhood was effected, by the terms of which the United Brotherhood assumed trade jurisdiction over the members of the Amalgamated Society, leaving to the latter its nominal membership and its beneficiary features. This arrangement has practically resulted in the absorption of the Amalgamated Society into the United Brotherhood.<sup>1</sup>

The Carpenters' Union has had a radical past, but due to the character of its present leadership, it is now regarded as one of the most conservative of American trade unions. The membership, it may safely be said, is largely native born, although accurate figures as to the nationality of the members are not available. Membership of the Carpenters' Union in 1926 was 319,700.<sup>2</sup> It is the only union composed chiefly of native born workers in which the influence of the Workers' Party can be traced to an appreciable degree.

Most of the Trade Union Educational League activity in the Carpenters' Union has been confined to a few local unions. The only local unions in which the Workers' Party and the League have been able to gain a foothold are those composed almost entirely of foreign-born members, as Local 376 in New York, or those in which the members are chiefly foreign born.

The great majority of the local unions have been little

<sup>1</sup> Handbook of American Trade Unions, Bulletin of the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 17-18.

<sup>2</sup> The American Labor Year Book, 1927, p. 71.

influenced by the League. The struggle within the union has, therefore, been a series of more or less isolated incidents, as one or another affected local union has come into conflict with the government of the national union. The more general points of disagreement and attack have been concerned largely with the activities of President Hutcheson in New York in 1916 and in Chicago in 1922.

The members of the left wing in the Carpenters' Union have accused President Hutcheson of having betrayed the interests of the New York strikers in 1916. They alleged the facts to be as follows: That on May 1, 1916, the New York carpenters went on strike for an increase in wages of fifty cents per day, the strike having been ordered by a referendum vote of the membership in the New York district, and sanctioned by the National Executive Board of the United Brotherhood; that 70 per cent. of the strikers had gained their demands when Hutcheson, on the promise of the Employers' Association of a future increase in wages, and without consulting the District Council, ordered the 3,000 men still on strike to return to work at the old rate of wages; that the New York District Council submitted the matter to a referendum vote, and Hutcheson's settlement was rejected by a vote of 11,475 to 119; that nevertheless Hutcheson still insisted that the men should work for \$5.00 per day when almost all of them were earning \$5.50, and, upon their refusal to obey, he suspended the entire membership of the sixty-three local unions; that he then opened and maintained strike-breaking agencies at the expense of the Brotherhood, and recruited men to replace those still on strike; that in spite of all this the strike was won, and when eighty-four delegates from the expelled local unions were sent to the 1916 convention of the Brotherhood, the police were used to keep them from presenting their side of the story in the convention hall. The left wing group charged that the order to return to work at the old rate of

\* The Carpenter, June, 1916, pp. 16-17.

wages involved a reduction in pay for more than 13,000 members from the higher wage already won by them.<sup>4</sup>

The League also charged that President Hutcheson in Chicago in 1922 had signed an agreement that was a replica of the Landis agreement,<sup>5</sup> the outstanding points being as follows:

1. There shall be no strikes or lockouts or stoppages of work, neither shall members of union collectively leave the work of a member of the Building Trades Employers Association.
2. There shall be no agreement providing for the discrimination of building material, raw or manufactured.
3. The amount of work a man may perform shall not be restricted by a union or its representatives, and the use of machinery, tools, appliances, or methods, shall not be restricted or interfered with.
4. The employer shall be at liberty to employ or discharge whomsoever he sees fit.

This agreement, known as the "Twelve Points," was entered into by the Building Trades Association with the Building Trades Employers Association on October 10, 1922, and reaffirmed at a meeting of the Building Trade Council on June 12, 1926.

Local Union 181 of Chicago adopted a resolution vigorously denouncing this agreement as detrimental to the interests of the Carpenters in that it surrendered the fruits of many hard fought victories at a time when no concessions were necessary. The resolution also condemned the methods used in making the agreement as the cheapest kind of political trickery, and demanded that the delegates to the Carpenters' Convention then in session read the agreement and pass judgment upon it before adjournment of the convention.<sup>6</sup> Although forwarded to the General Convention, the resolution was not acted upon by that body.

Nothing of importance occurred from 1922 until the Los Angeles incident in 1924. The radical group accused Hutcheson of cooperating with the police of that city in expelling

<sup>4</sup> "What is Wrong in the Carpenters' Union?"—A pamphlet issued by the T. U. E. L.

<sup>5</sup> Appeal from Local 376 to the 22nd Convention of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

members of the League from the Carpenters' Union. The facts, according to the League, were as follows: On March 1, 1924, the police raided a meeting of the League held in Los Angeles, and arrested all the thirty-nine persons, both men and women, present. The authorities confiscated all the material there, and, after taking the names, addresses, and local union affiliation of those arrested, released them on their own recognition. On March 3, the League asserted, the list of names and addresses, together with the minutes and a list of those who had contributed to the Labor Defense Council,<sup>7</sup> were in the possession of the Carpenters' District Council. The raid, the League leaders charged, was a conspiracy between the labor officials and the police. Sixteen members of the Carpenters' Union, who had been present at the League meeting, were expelled by the order of General President Hutcheson, and the local unions were instructed to strike their names from their books.

All the expelled members appealed to the 21st General Convention, held in Indianapolis, Indiana, in 1924. The appeal, it was asserted, was forwarded by registered mail, but it did not come before the convention. On September 27, 1924, the appeal was heard by the General Executive Board, and delegates Melville and Gore, of Local Union 158, and Blum, of Local Union 426, of Los Angeles, together with General Organizer Muir, were present. The Board held that the Trade Union Educational League was antagonistic and "dual" to the United Brotherhood of Carpenters' and Joiners of America, and sustained the act of the General President in suspending the sixteen members.<sup>8</sup> The Board recommended, however, that if the suspended members filed affidavits with the general office to the effect that they had severed all connections and affiliations with the League, and never again would give it or any similar organization any recognition, support, encouragement, or assistance, they should be per-

<sup>7</sup> The Labor Defense Council is an organization, according to the Left Wing, created to defend labor organizers and speakers imprisoned for their labor activities.

<sup>8</sup> *The Carpenter*, Nov., 1924, p. 40.

mitted, upon payment of all back dues and per capita taxes, to continue their membership in the Brotherhood; but that they should not be permitted to hold office in or serve as committeemen of any local union for a period of five years. This ruling applied to all the suspended members except one, McClure, whom the General Executive Board regarded as most active in the League.<sup>9</sup> His suspension was to be permanent.

To this decision the sixteen members made a vigorous reply, part of which was as follows:

In the event that we swear away our freedom of thought, speech, action in this manner, then the General Executive Board will permit us to continue membership in the United Brotherhood under the following conditions: That we shall not be permitted to hold office in any Local Union, or serve as committeemen of any Local Union for a period of five years.

In other words, they would seal our lips and prevent us from doing any real progressive work in the Labor movement in Los Angeles. Every Union man knows that there is only one reason for belonging to a labor union in Los Angeles, and that is to be a Live Wire and keep on fighting on the job and in the Local Union for a better organization and better working conditions. In other words, if a man did not have some ideal that he could work for in his organization he might as well not belong: because every one knows the mere fact of a carpenter carrying a union card does not make any difference to him in securing a job and wages in Los Angeles at the present time.<sup>10</sup>

The expelled men also announced their intention to continue their fight for a trial and for reinstatement.

In the early part of 1925 the uncompromising opposition of the Carpenters' Union to the League was again manifested, this time in Detroit. On January 10, the General Executive Board expelled President Reynolds of Local Union 2140 of Detroit, because of his alleged membership in the League.<sup>11</sup> Reynolds had served as vice-president of the District Council, and as a member of the Detroit Executive Board. Local Union 2140 refused to recognize the order of expulsion, and notified the general office that the instruction would not be

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>10</sup> Appeal from Local Union 376 to the 22nd convention of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America.

<sup>11</sup> The Carpenter, March, 1925, p. 34.

complied with. In this policy it received the united support of the other Detroit local unions. President Hutcheson, hearing that Reynolds continued to attend the meetings, resorted to an injunction to restrain him from participating in Brotherhood affairs.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, Reynolds still participated in his local union meetings, and also appeared before other local unions to give his side of the argument; and in several instances one of Hutcheson's organizers is said to have brought policemen to enforce the injunction. All of the Detroit local unions went on record as opposing Hutcheson's expulsion policy, and defied the injunction.

Hutcheson then submitted according to the League to each member of the Detroit local unions a copy of the following pledge, to be signed by him. The pledge, contemptuously referred to by the Workers' Party as the "Yellow Dog Contract," was in these terms:<sup>13</sup>

I, the undersigned, do hereby promise and agree that I will in no way affiliate with or give support, assistance, or comfort to the Trade Union Educational League, or any other similar or kindred organization.

In subscribing to the above I do so of my own free will and accord, and agree that it is understood that my membership in the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America be forfeited without complaint by me.

.....  
Witness

The men concerned refused to sign this pledge, and Local Union 2140, together with the local unions supporting it, were expelled from the Brotherhood.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, the local unions continued to function and are fighting for reinstatement. At present, according to the Workers' Party, the expelled local unions are growing in strength and members, while the District Council organized by Hutcheson is merely a semblance of an organization.

Of less significance than the Reynolds affair was the Burgess incident. W. F. Burgess was a member and business repre-

<sup>12</sup> The American Labor Year Book, 1926, p. 121.

<sup>13</sup> The Progressive Building Trades Worker, 1925.

<sup>14</sup> The American Labor Year Book, 1926, p. 122.

sentative of Local Union 8, Philadelphia, and during the last union election, as campaign manager for Willis K. Brown, he had written a leaflet criticizing Hutcheson. In this leaflet he said, among other things: "Give a beggar a horse and he will ride it to death . . . Give him a rope long enough and he will hang himself . . . Whom the Gods would destroy they first make mad." Burgess was later expelled by the General Executive Board.<sup>15</sup>

President Hutcheson thus has had to meet the vigorous if limited opposition of the League. At the Carpenters' Convention in 1924 and in the election of officers it opposed Hutcheson and supported the following program:

1. Affiliation to the Building Trades Department.
2. Abolition of the National Board of Jurisdictional Awards.
3. Development of job control, so that the workers can put an end to the speed-up system and stop the discharge of workers at the mere whim of the boss. Building strong job committees means building a powerful union.
4. A five day, forty hour, week, for the purpose of reducing unemployment.
5. Uniform agreements for all building trade workers, to expire at the same time in each district.
6. All agreements to be ratified by the rank and file.
7. A joint drive to organize the unorganized with the slogan: "A 100% organized industry."
8. Old age pensions.
9. Reinstatement of the Los Angeles expelled members, and re-admittance to union activity of Fred Burgess of Philadelphia.
10. The right of minority opinion to freedom of expression in the union.
11. The right of the General President to suspend mem-

<sup>15</sup> The Carpenter, March, 1925, p. 35.

bers or locals to be abolished. Such rights to be vested in the General Executive Board, who will act only on the recommendation of State or District Councils.

12. National Conventions to be held biennially.
13. Committee on Rules to govern Convention to be elected by the delegates assembled.
14. Organizers to be elected by a referendum vote in the districts they represent. No appointed organizer shall be a delegate to state or national conventions.
15. Amalgamation of the building trades upon a departmental basis along the lines laid down by the 1913 convention of the Building Trades Department.
16. International affiliation with the Building Trades International Secretariat, to include the Russian Building Trades.
17. Independent Working Class Political Action to protect the political interests of the worker.
18. Recognition of, and trade relations with Soviet Russia.<sup>16</sup>

For supporting this program the General Executive Board reprimanded Local Union 376, New York. It alleged that this program "contained planks in opposition to our laws and constitution and not in conformity with our obligations."<sup>17</sup>

In the election held in 1924, Morris Rosen, the League candidate for General President, was officially credited with 9,014 votes, as against 34,436 for Brown, and 77,985 for Hutcheson, who was re-elected.<sup>18</sup>

The Workers' Party also strenuously opposed President Hutcheson's proposal to establish a home for aged members of the union, unable to support themselves. The Workers' Party argued that militant tactics should be adopted and higher wages secured, so that the necessity for such a home would

<sup>16</sup> Progressive Building Trades Worker, 1924.

<sup>17</sup> The Carpenter, May, 1925, p. 34.

<sup>18</sup> American Labor Year Book, 1925, pp. 103-104.

be obviated. The question was submitted to a referendum, and the members voted in favor of establishing such a home. The Workers' Party then charged that the vote had been padded.<sup>19</sup>

President Hutcheson, in his opening address at the 21st convention, denounced the activities of the radical group in the following words:

In many localities there have been attempts made to disrupt not only the morale of the membership of our organization, but the conditions that have been established. These attempts were made by different forces, and from different angles. In some localities, the endeavor was made by the employers, backed by the Manufacturers' Association, the Chambers of Commerce, etc. . . .

In other instances and in other localities attacks have been made on our organization by those who are known as trade unionists. I refer to the instances of some of the other building trade organizations attempting to force our membership to accept a condition that is not in conformity with the laws, regulations, and jurisdictional claims of our Brotherhood.

Again there has been another form of attack made, more insidious than either of the others. That attack has been made in many instances from within our organization by men who have been misled into believing that the propaganda that has been spread by men like Foster and his kind was more in keeping with Organized Labor than the principles of our organization . . . . Every member of our organization should remember that the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America is a trade union organization, and that any time any member advocates anything that pertains to Industrialism, Communism, or any other "ism" that has for its purpose the disintegration of our Brotherhood or the putting into effect of what might be termed an industrial organization, there is no place in our organization for that kind of man. . . . Advocates of that sort of thing should be kicked out quickly.<sup>20</sup>

There have been two clashes between the Local Union 376 and Hutcheson's administration. One such incident was the refusal of the New York District Council to seat Morris Rosen, the League candidate for president in the previous election, as a delegate from Local Union 376.<sup>21</sup> The reason assigned was that Rosen was not a carpenter working at his trade. General President Hutcheson on appeal sustained the decision of the District Council, and the General Executive Board

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 1926, p. 121.

<sup>20</sup> Proceedings of the 21st General Convention of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, 1-2.

<sup>21</sup> The American Labor Year Book, 1926, p. 121.

did likewise. The League attempted to gain control of the New York District Council in the December, 1925, election, and the radicals nominated a complete ticket. Its program proposed the annual election of officers by referendum, job control, freedom of expression, right of each local union to be the sole judge of the qualifications of its representatives, and submission of amendments to referendum if endorsed by five local unions.<sup>22</sup> In the election the "Left Wing" slate was defeated.

The second clash between President Hutcheson and Local Union 376 occurred when, in 1926, General President Hutcheson ordered the local union to submit its books for examination. The local union failed to comply,<sup>23</sup> and on June 14, 1926, after the demand had been repeated several times, the General Executive Board revoked the charter. The leaders of the local union, who were members of the League, still resisted; but, finding that they did not have the undivided support of the members and learning that the General Executive Board could bring them into court and compel them to furnish the books, they submitted, and delivered the books for examination. At the same time they appealed to the next Carpenters' Convention, to be held in 1928.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>23</sup> The Carpenter, July, 1926, p. 44.

## CHAPTER III

## UNITED MINE WORKERS OF AMERICA

The first successful attempt to organize coal miners in America was made by the Knights of Labor, who established a number of their assemblies in the mining regions. The miners soon recognized the desirability of a union limited to those employed in their industry, and in 1885 the National Federation of Miners and Mine Laborers was formed. This was followed by the National Progressive Union, organized four years later. Early in 1890 representatives of the various organizations of coal miners met at Columbus, Ohio, and on January 25, 1890, all these unions were consolidated to form the United Mine Workers of America.<sup>1</sup> The new union at once affiliated with the American Federation of Labor.

The United Mine Workers have always felt that the industrial, rather than the craft, form of organization was best suited to their industry, and have sought to include in their union all workers in and around the mines. This policy early resulted in disputes with various craft unions, particularly the engineers' and machinists' organizations. In these struggles the United Mine Workers proved to be stronger, and the workers in these crafts are now united with the miners and mine laborers to form a general industrial union. The membership of the United Mine Workers is now about 500,000.<sup>2</sup>

The influence of the radical elements in the United Mine Workers can be traced as far back as 1919. In that year a number of Illinois local unions became involved in a strike, regarded by the leaders of the United Mine Workers as unauthorized.<sup>3</sup> President Farrington of District 12 (Illi-

<sup>1</sup> Proceedings of the 29th Convention of the United Mine Workers of America, 17.

<sup>2</sup> Handbook of American Trade Unions, Bulletin of the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 100-102.

<sup>3</sup> United Mine Workers' Journal, Sept. 1, 1919, pp. 8-9.

nois), under the authority of Acting President Lewis, revoked the charters of twenty-four local unions for participating in the strike. The suspended local unions nevertheless sent thirty-eight delegates to the Cleveland convention of 1919. The credentials committee reported against seating them, and its report was supported by Farrington. He declared that the real cause of the trouble in the suspended local unions was the activity of the Socialist Labor Party, which had directed its field workers and agitators to draw the miners from the United Mine Workers into the Workers' International Industrial Union. He also stated that of the total membership of 90,000 not more than 20,000 had participated in the strike, although the Socialist Labor Party had reported the number to be 75,000. After discussing the case for two days, the convention, by a vote of six to one, decided not to seat the delegates.<sup>4</sup>

The Canadian local unions of the miners were also affected by the activities of the radicals at an early date. In March, 1919, a conference of representatives of western Canadian local unions was held in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The conference considered the possibility of forming the "One Big Union," and directed that the question be submitted to a vote of the trade unionists in the western provinces. The members of District 18, United Mine Workers, voted in favor of affiliation with the One Big Union, and a district-wide strike was ordered, to become effective on June 23, 1919. The agreement under which the miners were working was repudiated, and all men, including those necessary to protect the mines, were ordered to stop work. As a result the mines suffered very great damage. On July 12, 1919, the International Executive Board of the United Mine Workers authorized the sending of a commission to district 18 to assume control over its affairs. The commission reported that the president and other officers of the district were members of the One Big Union, and recommended that the district charter

<sup>4</sup> Proceedings of the 27th Convention of the United Mine Workers of America, 560.



be revoked. This action was taken on July 28, 1919; the One Big Union was outlawed, and a campaign for the reorganization of the district was instituted. The miners of British Columbia returned to the union, but the leaders and promoters of the One Big Union were excluded.<sup>5</sup>

The Belleville, Ill., local unions were also the scene of radical agitation in 1919, when certain rebellious elements organized the Belleville District Miners' Defense League. The League professed very radical aims, and issued an appeal for financial assistance to all members of organized labor.<sup>6</sup>

In 1920 charges of Communist activities in the anthracite region were made. The men quit work in three collieries of the Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company, Nos. 4, 5 and 6, in the Panther Creek Valley. Vice-President Andrew Matti of District 7 of the United Mine Workers charged that the walkout was engineered by agents of the Industrial Workers of the World, who were endeavoring to promote the One Big Union in the anthracite coal field.<sup>7</sup> In the same year the Workers' (Communist) Party became politically active in the Miners' union. In October and November, 1920, the Central Executive Committee of the Party issued circulars, which were distributed broadcast in certain sections of the mining fields, especially in the anthracite districts. The circular denounced the leadership of the United Mine Workers, and declared that the government of the United States must be "overthrown by mass action, culminating in armed insurrection and civil war."<sup>8</sup>

The most significant episode in the struggle between the Communists and the administration for the leadership of the miners' union in this period was the "Kansas District Case." In January, 1920, the Kansas legislature created a Court of Industrial Relations, which was organized on February 2, 1920. The court met opposition when it began its

<sup>5</sup> United Mine Workers' Journal, Sept. 15, 1919, p. 9; Aug. 1, 1919, p. 8; Dec. 1, 1920, p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., Oct. 15, 1919, p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., May 1, 1920, p. 10.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., Nov. 15, 1920, p. 8.

work in the coal district. President Alexander Howat and three other officials of Kansas District 14 of the United Mine Workers refused to testify before it, and defended their action by claiming that the law was unconstitutional.<sup>9</sup> For this they were imprisoned, and immediately 1200 miners went on strike.<sup>10</sup> Not until the four officials were released on bond did the miners return to work. Howat continued to defy the court. The Attorney-General of the State obtained a temporary injunction restraining the local union officials from further strikes.<sup>11</sup> The men employed in two mines owned by members of the Southwestern Interstate Coal Operators' Association, in spite of the injunction, went on a strike unauthorized by the International officials. Thereupon the Association appealed to the headquarters of the United Mine Workers to enforce their agreement in Kansas. The union officers agreed with the operators that serious violations of the agreement had occurred, and summoned Vice-President August Dorchy, of the Kansas District. Shortly thereafter, there occurred a strike of thirty-three local unions. President Lewis of the United Mine Workers regarded this as a further violation of the union's laws, and ordered the local unions to return to work at once and take up their grievances in the regular manner. He also called Howat's attention to the situation, and directed him to see that the violations of the joint agreement ceased at once. Howat, however, a former socialist, and at that time an ardent supporter of the Workers' Party, refused to obey the order. President Lewis then directed a committee of the International Executive Board, consisting of Board Members Watkins, of District 6, Van Horn of District 11, and Zimmerman of District 12, to go to Kansas and conduct an investigation.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., April 15, 1920, p. 13.

<sup>10</sup> Alexander Howat was very popular among the miners. In 1920 he was a candidate for vice-president, and received 132,416 votes as against 143,452 for Murray, who was reelected. Howat was elected a delegate to the A. F. of L. convention, polling 130,094 votes (United Mine Workers' Journal, Feb. 15, 1921, p. 57).

<sup>11</sup> The American Labor Year Book, 1921-1922, pp. 71-73.

<sup>12</sup> United Mine Workers' Journal, Aug. 15, 1920, p. 14.

The Communists tried to convince the Kansas miners that the International Union would sanction the attempt of the operators to impose new conditions upon them, and that the International officials were in sympathy with and assisted the Kansas Court of Industrial Relations. The International officials branded both these charges as false, and declared their opposition to the principle of compulsory arbitration. As a result of the controversy President Lewis on October 12, 1921, suspended the charter of District 14, and removed Howat and all the other district officials from office. Lewis appointed provisional officers, who assumed control of the offices and affairs of the district, and ordered all miners to return to work at once. The former district officials, supported by a large majority of the Kansas miners, were now in open rebellion against the International officers. They sought an injunction from the Circuit Court of Jackson County, Missouri, to restrain the International officials from ousting them from office, expelling them from the union, and taking charge of the district; but the Court denied the injunction, and the restraining order already issued was dissolved.<sup>13</sup>

The Kansas case came up for consideration at the twenty-eighth convention of the mine workers, which met in Indianapolis on September 20, 1921. President Lewis appealed to the delegates to sustain the action of the International Executive Board, and the Committee on Officers' Reports so recommended. Every anti-administration element and influence in the convention, however, rallied to Howat's support. Howat in a speech attacked Lewis's policies, and President Farrington<sup>14</sup> of District 12 of Illinois and John H. Walker did

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., Nov. 1, 1921, p. 7; Oct. 15, 1921, p. 7; Nov. 15, 1921, p. 12; Jan. 1, 1922, p. 9; Feb. 1, 1922, pp. 3-4.

<sup>14</sup> The Communists later questioned Farrington's sincerity, declaring that "the outstanding champion of Howat's rights in the union was in 1922 Frank Farrington of Illinois, an arch-faker who was using Howat's case as a club in his fight for position against Lewis" ("Trade Unions in America," pamphlet of the Workers' Party, p. 32).

likewise.<sup>15</sup> Walker in 1919 had received 65,507½ votes in the election for president as against 114,355 for Frank J. Hayes, who was re-elected.<sup>16</sup>

The Kansas case occupied four days of the convention's time. Finally a roll call was ordered on the report of the committee. It soon became apparent that the combined attack on the administration had failed, and that the convention would sustain the action of the International Executive Board. Illinois cast 904 votes for Howat, and only 68 in support of the Board. Kansas voted 69 for Howat and 29 for the Board. District 11 (Indiana) gave Howat a slight majority. These favorable votes, however, were overcome by the votes of the three anthracite and two bituminous districts of Pennsylvania, and by the votes of Ohio, Iowa, Colorado, and Maryland; and the report of the committee was adopted by a vote of 2,753 to 1,781.<sup>17</sup>

The Kansas miners, supported to a large extent by those of Illinois, continued in a state of rebellion against the International officers. In December 1921, Farrington wrote two circulars on the Kansas situation, which were widely read by the members of the union. In one of the circulars he stated that there were not 300 men working in and around the mines in the state of Kansas, and that this number included mine bosses, engineers, firemen, and imported scabs and strike-breakers.<sup>18</sup>

On November 16, 1921, the miners who continued the strike were expelled from the union by an order of the International President. Sixty-eight local unions remained loyal to the International Union; the charters of eighty-three local unions were revoked. Of the total membership of District 14 (Kansas), the International officials estimated that 2500 members were expelled, 5000 miners returned to work, and

<sup>15</sup> Proceedings of the 28th convention of the United Mine Workers of America, 604, 743, 684.

<sup>16</sup> United Mine Workers' Journal, Feb. 15, 1919, p. 19.

<sup>17</sup> Proceedings of the 28th Convention of the United Mine Workers of America, 757-883.

<sup>18</sup> United Mine Workers' Journal, Jan. 1922, p. 10.

1500 left Kansas for other fields. New local unions were organized to replace those whose charters had been revoked. The local union to which Howat belonged was one of those that lost its charter, and the International officials held that Howat was therefore no longer a member of the union.<sup>19</sup>

In 1922 when the convention was again called into session for the purpose of considering the wage agreement, Howat, together with one hundred and twenty-five of his suspended followers, came to the meeting. Shortly after the session opened, he obtained the floor and demanded that his appeal from the action of the International Executive Board be heard. He declared that he and his supporters were "not asking for pity but for justice." President Lewis read a section from the miners' constitution, to the effect that any member who resorts to the civil courts for redress of an alleged wrong before exhausting the tribunals of the union should be expelled from the union. He pointed out that Howat had sought an injunction against the International officials, but had failed.

Lewis then ruled that an appeal at that time was not valid. He criticized Howat for asking the convention to cease consideration of the serious work of scale-making, for which it had been called, and compared him to the "great emperor of Rome who had played the violin while the city was burning." Howat then appealed from the decision. Lewis said that in view of the circumstances, and not according to any parliamentary law, he would permit the house to decide the question. Howat now made a formal presentation of his case, to which Lewis replied, defending his ruling. The convention was in an uproar during a great part of the time that the case was being discussed. At the conclusion of the arguments Vice-President Murray called for a ye and nay vote on Lewis' ruling. The result showed 866 votes to sustain the decision and 977 to overrule it. A roll call was then demanded, and the convention sustained Lewis' ruling by a vote of 2,073 to 1,955.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., Dec. 1, 1921, p. 3.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., March 1, 1922, pp. 3-4, 13.

Despite the action of the convention, the Illinois district continued to do everything in its power to help Howat and his faction. Speakers and representatives were sent to Kansas to encourage them. An assessment of one dollar a month to aid the strikers was declared, and \$320,000 was sent.<sup>21</sup> The assessment was declared illegal by the International Executive Board.<sup>22</sup> The anthracite districts on the other hand were steadfast in their support of the administration. At the June, 1923, convention of District 1, 5, and 9, which comprise the anthracite region, a resolution calling for the reinstatement of Howat and his followers was defeated.<sup>23</sup> On October 25, 1922, the International Executive Board restored autonomy to District 14 (Kansas), where the membership was now composed only of those miners who had remained loyal to the International officials.<sup>24</sup>

In 1923 the conflict between the administration and the Communists centered about formation of the Progressive International Committee of the United Mine Workers. This organization was formed in February, 1923, at a conference held in Pittsburgh. The Committee was designed to be a radical organization within the union and to follow the usual policy of "boring from within." The Committee gave unity to the activities of the radicals, as it was intended to do, but it also resulted in a closer organization of the conservatives. Tom Myerscough, secretary of the Committee, was expelled from the union. Lewis and Farrington, who had been bitter opponents for years, now became reconciled and waged common war against the left wing.<sup>25</sup> The United Mine Workers of America officially declared the Progressive International Committee a dual organization, and ordered the expulsion of all members of the Committee.<sup>26</sup>

On February 10, 1923, the left wing held a conference of

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., May 1, 1922, p. 7.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., Dec. 15, 1921, p. 7.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., July 15, 1923, p. 3.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., Nov., 1922, p. 7.

<sup>25</sup> American Trade Unions, p. 33.

<sup>26</sup> United Mine Workers' Journal, Jan. 15, 1924, p. 8.

delegates from the mining fields of Ohio and Pennsylvania, the purpose of the meeting being to extend the Communist movement into all the districts and local unions of the miners. Two delegates from the anthracite region were present, and they assured the conference that the hard coal miners would join a proposed outlaw strike on April 1. The conference decided to pursue the following policies:

1. Establishment of headquarters for organizing activities at Pittsburgh, and the carrying on of an aggressive campaign to reorganize the miners' union in accordance with Communist doctrines.
2. An effort to bring about a general strike on April 1.
3. The holding of a conference of representatives of the miners of the United States and Canada, the conference to meet in Pittsburgh during the first week in June; and the launching of a new International organization of progressive miners within the union, which would gradually absorb it and eliminate its International and district officials.

William Z. Foster, organizer of the Trade Union Educational League, said at this conference that wonderful progress had been made among the miners in the Pittsburgh region, and that he expected to get sufficient support in the union to enable the left wing to control the policies of the next biennial convention, to be held in June, 1924.

Although just two weeks before, at a wage conference held in New York, the union and the operators had reached a working agreement, Foster and his associates at the February meeting frankly discussed plans for an outlaw strike on April 1. Fred Merrick, one of the Communist organizers is reported to have said: "We must have no settlement of this strike until an agreement can be negotiated, under the charter of a new union having one of our own men as its leader." The strike was to be started by inducing President Lewis to re-establish the strike of 1922 in the coke-producing region of Pennsylvania. The agitation of the Communists, it was expected would then spread it to the other coal fields by April 1.

After the Pittsburgh conference the Communist publications started a campaign to discredit President Lewis among the miners and to force him to reestablish the strike in the coke region as a means of protecting his influence there.

The conference advocated nationalization of the mines as the principal reform in the Communist program. On this question their platform said:

To meet this situation of demoralization a radical change must be made in the coal industry. There is only one solution at this moment that is possible and that is nationalization of the coal mines.

Against this plan will be marshalled all the forces and resources of plutocratic America. The capitalist press and its journalistic hirelings, together with an army of retainers composed of the intellectual and political prostitutes of Wall Street are flooding the country with an avalanche of lies, slander and misrepresentation against nationalization. Corrupt and reactionary labor leaders are also opposing this plan and every honest trade unionist who espouses its cause is marked for persecution.

In advocating nationalization of coal miners, the Progressive coal miners mean the operation of the coal mines under the direction of competent union miners, and not under a commission composed of the usual lawyers, bankers, and politicians. A political bureaucracy sitting at Washington as directors of the coal industry would be a monstrosity worse even than the abortion known as the "Railroad Labor Board," and would never be tolerated by the rank and file of the United Mine Workers of America. Nationalization of coal mines as a political program will be a failure unless it includes genuine democratic management of the mines. Since the efficient operation of the coal mines is only possible by those who have had experience in digging coal, we demand that the program of nationalization of coal mines shall provide for the operation of the mines entirely under the direction of union miners who alone are possessed of the technical, mechanical and manual skill necessary for the successful operation of the mines.

Foster and Merrick opened their campaign in southwestern Pennsylvania, and Alexander Howat, deposed president of the Kansas miners, was brought into the region as the chief speaker. Meetings were held in Fayette, Westmoreland, and other counties in the interests of the movement. Speakers appeared before local unions, and in many of them Communist nuclei were established. Efforts were also made to extend the movement to Ohio, West Virginia, Indiana, Illinois, central and eastern Pennsylvania, and to Nova Scotia and Alberta. Merrick also began his campaign to secure control of the miners' union in the Pittsburgh district. His first move was

to initiate a demand for a recount of the votes in the district election held December 12, 1922. He also announced that the progressives had decided to circulate petitions calling for the recall of all the officers of District 5 for improper conduct, especially in connection with the Fayette strike.<sup>27</sup>

In the meantime trouble was brewing in Nova Scotia. For some time the district had been subject to Communist influence, and in January, 1923, it had gone so far as to apply for membership in the Red International of Labor Unions. This application, however, was withdrawn by order of the Executive Council of the United Mine Workers of America.<sup>28</sup> In addition, the miners were angered by the action of the Provincial police in searching their homes for evidence of sedition. A strike among the steel workers was now to precipitate further disturbance. The steel workers at Sydney, Nova Scotia, had been conducting negotiations with their employer, a subsidiary of the British Empire Steel Corporation, in an effort to secure a twenty per cent. increase in wages, the eight hour day, and the check-off system of collecting dues. Upon their failure to obtain these demands they declared a strike, and on June 28, 1923, about 2,700 of the 3,500 employed in the steel plant stopped work. The militia and provincial police were immediately called to the scene. On July 3, the coal miners, who were employed by another subsidiary of the same corporation, went on strike as a protest against the presence of the military forces. The strikers issued a proclamation to the Canadian soldiers and the Dominion and Provincial police calling upon them to declare a strike against the government of Canada and of its various provinces.<sup>29</sup> They also appealed to the railroad employees not to move troops or coal.

Meanwhile the miners of District 26, Nova Scotia, had voted to go on strike as a district to obtain the restoration of

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, Nov. 1, 1923, pp. 8-10.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, Feb. 1, 1923, p. 8.

<sup>29</sup> Proceedings of the 29th convention of the United Mine Workers of America, 273.

the 1921 scale of wages. Before the district strike was ordered President Lewis had notified the district that the existing agreement, which did not expire until June 15, 1924, must not be violated. On July 11, the Board of the district, which was under the direct influence of the Workers' Party, informed Lewis that the strike was not called because of dissatisfaction with the terms of the agreement, but as a protest against the use of military forces in an industrial dispute. A committee of the General Executive Board was sent to Nova Scotia to conduct an investigation. Upon receiving the report of the committee Lewis revoked the charter of the district,<sup>30</sup> and wrote to Livingston, its president:

I have in mind that you are a self-proclaimed revolutionist. I am familiar with the constant intrigue between yourself and your evil genius McLachlan and your revolutionary masters in Moscow. I can recall the sentiments which you enunciated at a comparatively recent meeting of the International Executive Board at Indianapolis, when, with the cold ferocity of a five-year old defying its mother, you announced that you were a believer in revolution by force. No doubt the present strike in Nova Scotia corresponds with your idea of revolution against the British Government and in pursuance thereof. In consideration of these strange facts the international union feels warranted in intervening for the protection of its membership, and to assure the discharge of its properly assumed obligations.

You may as well know now as at any time in the future that the United Mine Workers is not a political institution and cannot be used to promote the fallacious whims of any political fanatic who seeks to strike down the established institutions of his government.<sup>31</sup>

When President Lewis revoked the charter of the district he installed as provisional officers men who in the 1922 district elections had been beaten five to one.<sup>32</sup> The new president ordered the Mine Workers to return to work and they obeyed his order. It was charged that the steel workers had not allowed maintenance men to bank the fires, and that the mine workers who operated pumps and fans had quit work at the order of the district officers. Alexander Howat, who had become an ardent supporter of the Trade Union Educational

<sup>30</sup> United Mine Workers' Journal, Aug. 1, 1923, p. 3.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, Jan. 15, 1924, p. 8.

<sup>32</sup> Proceedings of the 29th convention of the United Mine Workers of America, 421.

League, was sent to Canada to agitate against the International officials, but the Dominion government prevented his entry into Canada.<sup>33</sup> The revocation of the charter of the district aroused considerable feeling among the United Mine Workers, and promised to become an issue at the next convention to be held in Indianapolis on January 22, 1924.<sup>34</sup>

The convention of the United Mine Workers which met in Indianapolis in February, 1924, was the first in which the left wing assembled with a definite program to support.<sup>35</sup> The specific issue on which the members of the Trade Union Educational League centered their fight was the reinstatement of Howat and the opposition to the three year agreement with employers entered into by the administration on behalf of the union. There were more struggles between the administration and the left wing at the convention than at any other convention in the history of the miners' union. The adherents of the left wing introduced a number of resolutions. Among the reforms demanded were the following: the election instead of the appointment of International organizers; the election by the convention instead of appointment of committees and officers; the reinstatement of Howat and his followers; the nationalization of mines; the direct election of American Federation of Labor officers; revision of the United Mine Workers' election system; the simultaneous expiration of all wage contracts, anthracite as well as bituminous; and election instead of appointments to vacancies.<sup>36</sup> All of these resolutions, however, were defeated.

The convention adopted a resolution denouncing the activities of the Red International of Labor Unions. It called attention to the denunciation of the miners' union by the Red International, and declared that a member of the United Mine Workers had no more right to affiliate with such a group than with the Chamber of Commerce or the National Coal Associa-

<sup>33</sup> United Mine Workers' Journal, May 15, 1923, p. 16.

<sup>34</sup> The American Labor Year Book, 1923-1924, pp. 345-346.

<sup>35</sup> American Trade Unions, 33.

<sup>36</sup> United Mine Workers' Journal, Feb. 1, 1924, p. 5.

tion.<sup>37</sup> The Committee on Resolutions did not favor any of the resolutions concerning the reinstatement of the Nova Scotia district. Instead of drafting a substitute resolution, however, the committee presented a complete review of the affair from the time the strike was called and endorsed the action of the Executive Board. Considerable discussion by the Communists and their supporters followed, after which President Lewis reviewed the events which culminated in the revocation of the charter.<sup>38</sup> He declared that the officials of the district, who were under the influence of the Communists, had sanctioned a thirty-seven per cent. decrease in wages; and that Secretary McLachlan and President Livingston of that district, who were expelled from the union, were closely connected with the Red International of Labor in Moscow, and were using the name and stationery of the United Mine Workers to carry on their red propaganda.<sup>39</sup> The convention then voted to adopt the committee's report.<sup>40</sup>

The question, however, was not yet disposed of. The next day Vice-President Murray stated that he had heard it said in certain quarters that the Nova Scotia miners had not been fairly treated, and for this reason, he announced, the matter would be reopened for further consideration if the convention wished. A motion to this effect was carried, and the subject was again placed before the convention for debate. Half a dozen or more supporters of the deposed officials made speeches praising their activities, though admitting that they had violated the miners' contract. They alleged that John P. White, a former president of the United Mine Workers, and the representative of the International officials at the district con-

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., Feb. 1, 1924, p. 4.

<sup>38</sup> Proceedings of the 29th convention of the United Mine Workers of America, 270-277.

<sup>39</sup> According to the statement of the International officials, the district officials both printed their stationery and painted their rooms the color of red. They also sent to all local unions in Nova Scotia the circular letter from the Red International, dated Moscow, March 10, 1923, denouncing the conservative leadership of the United Mine Workers (United Mine Workers' Journal, Feb. 15, 1924, p. 10).

<sup>40</sup> Proceedings of the 29th convention of the United Mine Workers of America, 277.

vention and wage conferences of District 26, had signed the agreement for wage reduction. President Lewis and Secretary Green both spoke at length upon the subject. The report of the committee, when finally submitted to a vote, was adopted by the convention.<sup>41</sup>

The committee also reported adversely regarding the reinstatement of Thomas Myerscough, leader of the progressives in District 5, who had been expelled for what the administration considered dual union activities. Myerscough attempted to speak after his appeal was read, but was prevented from doing so by President Lewis, who explained that the appeal had been read in full, and that the committee had refused reinstatement. A demonstration by Myerscough's adherents followed but the convention voted to adopt the committee's report.

The committee then took up the case of Howat. The entire case was reviewed and it was pointed out that Howat had refused to comply with any of the conditions imposed by the International Executive Board. The committee announced as its decision that until Howat had fully obeyed the laws of the United Mine Workers he had no standing in the convention on his appeal. President Lewis upheld the action of the Board, and had arrived at the same conclusion reached by the committee. Howat, though not a delegate, twice attempted to speak, but was prevented from so doing. When President Lewis announced that the report of the committee was adopted there was an outburst from the supporters of the Communists, and it was with difficulty that the rest of the business of the convention was completed. After the official adjournment of the convention, Howat, Myerscough, and their followers held a "rump" meeting in the hall. John Watt of District 12, who had led the insurgent groups in the convention, presided, and Howat presented his side of the case to the delegates who remained.<sup>42</sup>

Among the other resolutions adopted by the convention was

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., pp. 403-404, 503.

<sup>42</sup> United Mine Workers' Journal, Feb. 15, 1924, pp. 3-4.

one approving of the action of the International officials in assuming control over the affairs of District 19, and in ordering Duncan McDonald, a well-known radical who had been opposing the administration in that district, to refrain from further interference.<sup>43</sup>

The attitude of the conservative leaders of the miners' union toward the radical activities is well represented by Vice-President Murray's address to the 1924 Carpenters' convention. In this speech he said:

There is no union in this country of ours today that has had more of this kind of stuff (boring from within) to contend with than the U. M. W. of A. At the last international convention . . . , agents working directly under the direction of people in Moscow . . . , were calling meetings every night after the convention adjourned its sessions and there preparing their program of villification and abuse to be brought into the International Convention of the U. M. W. of A. the following day. It required unbounded energy and a feeling of intense loyalty on the part of that great delegation of twenty-three hundred men to drive from the convention each and every one of those men who, either secretly, openly, or otherwise, was seeking to castigate and destroy the reputation of the U. M. W. of A. . . . Two years ago our union was required to undergo a fight of some 600,000 men. . . . The officers of the International Union . . . called that strike, directed the battle, eventually won it . . . but the employing interests were given the undivided support of every Foster sympathizer in this country.

In Western Pennsylvania 35,000 non-union men were called out, brought into the ranks of our union, and fought most manfully and nobly with the remainder of the members of our union in that great struggle. . . . Men whom we had never seen or known before started the denunciation of their destructive propaganda in that strike region. . . . Thomas Myerscough, an agent of Bill Foster, a confessed agent paid by the Foster organization, whatever it may be, issued a circular over his own name inviting the men who worked in the mines in Western Pennsylvania to meet with him for the purpose of giving consideration to the acceptance of a reduction of \$2.50 per day in wages. Later the traitor was found out and his own Executive Board held a meeting and kicked him out of the U. M. W. of A.

In almost every district in the U. M. W. of A. for the past four years the agents of this organization have been at work, but they have been repelled in every instance, they have been defeated, not only in District Conventions and in local unions, but they have been forcibly removed from our union, by our local unions and by our district organizations and by the ultimatums of our International Executive Board and our International Convention. So that despite their efforts they made absolutely no headway in the U. M. W. of A.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., Feb. 1, 1924, p. 4.

<sup>44</sup> Proceedings of the 21st convention of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, 7-9.

The Trade Union Educational League, after its defeat in the International convention, continued its fight in the state conventions of the miners' union, and under its leadership the Kansas district voted against the policies of the administration. The left wing was also very active in the convention of District 12 of Illinois, which met on May 31, 1924. It succeeded in having adopted a resolution calling for a special International convention to hear the Howat case. It made an effort to secure a contribution of \$500 to the Federated Press; the committee on resolutions recommended that the appropriation be made, but the convention rejected the proposal.<sup>45</sup>

In the union elections held December 9, 1924, the left wing nominated as candidates—Voyzey, Staples, and Nearing. Although the men were unknown, the progressive forces were so strong that the returns gave the left wing candidate for president 66,000 votes as against 136,000 for Lewis, who was reelected.<sup>46</sup> The League was far from being satisfied with this result, and charged the administration with stuffing the ballot boxes and throwing out radical votes. In the Kansas election Howat declared himself a candidate for the office of district president, but the officials did not allow his name to appear on the ballots. Nevertheless, many of his supporters wrote in his name and cast their votes for him.<sup>47</sup>

On April 15, 1926, President Lewis, on behalf of the Executive Board, announced that the Communist Party and all its affiliated organizations were dual to the United Mine Workers of America and that membership in such organizations rendered a member of the Miners' Union liable to expulsion, as provided by Article 14, section 7 of the United Mine Workers constitution.<sup>48</sup>

The left wing became active again in the election held towards the close of 1926, and gave its hearty support to John

<sup>45</sup> United Mine Workers' Journal, June 15, 1924, p. 6.

<sup>46</sup> The American Labor Year Book, 1926, p. 103.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 1925, pp. 102-103.

<sup>48</sup> United Mine Workers' Journal, April 15, 1926, p. 4.

Brophy, president of District 2, who opposed Lewis in the campaign for the presidency of the miners' union. During the campaign Brophy issued a pamphlet in which he discussed, from the point of view of the League, the loss in membership suffered by the United Mine Workers, analyzed the causes for the decline, and announced his program for remedying the situation. He declared that since the termination of the 1922 strike the union had lost more than 200,000 members, and that entire districts were dead or dying. In West Virginia, for example, the membership of 60,000 had been reduced to a few hundred. The union no longer existed in Maryland; it had suffered severe losses in Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, and Missouri, and had been weakened in Kansas.

The causes for the union's decline, he maintained, were unemployment, and unprogressive and mistaken policies on the part of the International officers. Unemployment was the result of a variety of causes, among which the more important, in his opinion, were: the overdevelopment of the bituminous industry; the introduction of better coal cutting machinery, coal loaders, conveyors, and other labor-saving devices; the increasing use of oil and other substitutes for coal; the development of water power; and the invention of more efficient furnaces and boilers, which require less coal to generate the same amount of heat and power. Unemployment in his opinion was greatest in the union fields because the operators had in many cases discontinued the operation of their union mines in the North while they exploited the cheaper labor available in the Southern non-union districts.

Unfortunate economic conditions, however, were not the only cause of the decline of the union; ill-advised policies on the part of the International officers, Brophy declared, had been contributing factors of no small importance. One of the mistakes, in his opinion, was the signing of contracts with certain large companies covering only a portion of their mines. Another was the failure to carry out either the spirit or the letter of the resolutions adopted by the Convention with reference to nationalization.



The program by which Brophy expected to restore the union to its former prosperity and influence included the following measures and policies:

1. No wage cuts.
2. Organization of the non-union fields.
3. An active campaign of education among the membership for nationalization of coal mines, and establishment of the six-hour day and five-day week. By nationalization was meant public ownership of the mines and operation of them by representatives of the U. M. W., the technical management, and the government. Under public ownership no more mines would be opened than would be necessary to supply the needs of the nation, and the result would be steady work at union rates.
4. Formation of a Labor Party, in an attempt to establish a government sympathetic towards the miner.
5. Reinstatement of all members of the union unjustly discriminated against.
6. Expiration of the bituminous and anthracite agreements at the same time.
7. Honest elections.
8. Democracy in the union.
9. Abolition of the operator's influence in the union.
10. Expulsion of corruptionists from office. By "corruptionists" was meant those union officials who were then on the operators' payroll, and those who were using the union as a stepping stone to secure good positions with the operators.

The Trade Union Educational League was foremost in advocating nationalization of coal mines and maintained that idle mines and idle miners were the results of competitive private ownership of the mines.<sup>49</sup> In other important respects, Brophy's platform made an appeal to the members of the Workers' Party.

On November 14, 1926, the left wing held a mass meeting

<sup>49</sup> Daily Worker, Dec. 11, 1926.

at the Imperial Theatre in New Kensington, Pa., to secure the indorsement of Brophy's candidacy for the office of International President. The meeting was addressed by Powers Hapgood, one of the prominent radicals in the miners' union. Lewis' supporters at the meeting made a determined attack upon Hapgood, charging him with being an ally of large West Virginia non-union coal interests in a campaign to destroy the United Mine Workers. They questioned his status as a bona fide miner, declaring that his earnings during his five years in the mines had amounted to only \$500.<sup>50</sup> The campaign was marked by violent vituperation.<sup>51</sup> The election returns gave Lewis 173,323½ votes as against 60,661 for Brophy.<sup>52</sup>

The thirtieth convention of the United Mine Workers was held in Indianapolis in January, 1927. The number of radicals present was small, but they were very active. The conservative majority, however, was able to defeat them regularly and with little difficulty. The first clash occurred on the second day of the convention, over a resolution relating to the organization of the non-union fields. John Brophy criticized the administration for signing an agreement with the Consolidation Coal Company during the 1922 strike as to its West Virginia mines, while allowing the company to continue its fight against recognition in its Pennsylvania and Maryland mines. He argued that this policy caused the defeat of the union, and alleged that after the company had its other mines running open shop, it repudiated the West Virginia contract. The union, he declared, must force coal companies to sign either for all their mines or for none.

Alexander Howat and Powers Hapgood, who had been sent as delegates by their local unions, were not reported on by the Credentials Committee because, it was alleged, they were not members of the union. Their names appeared neither on the

<sup>50</sup> United Mine Workers' Journal, Dec. 1, 1926, p. 15.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., Nov. 1, 1926, p. 3.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., Feb. 1, 1927, p. 13.

list of delegates nor on the list of those contested before the committee. Howat attempted to appeal to the delegates from the rear of the hall, but the sergeant-at-arms prevented him. Hapgood also attempted to appeal to the convention, but was not allowed to do so. The progressives charged that the administration had not only unseated one of their adherents, but that it was also responsible for the beatings that several of them suffered.

The convention not only defeated all the measures proposed by the left wing, but also adopted two important resolutions which clearly showed the union's attitude towards Communism. The first declared that the Miners' Union was opposed to recognition of Soviet Russia until Russia fulfills its obligations and refrains from interference in the affairs of other nations. It charged that Russian agents "are not only striking at the foundations of our Government, but they are likewise engaged in the unholy work of the attempted destruction of the American Labor movement," particularly of the United Mine Workers of America. The resolution declared:

The Miners' Union stands for government by law, and as such stands in the way of communism. The theories of communism and the principle of trade unionism will not blend. Those who preach the former cannot consistently practice the latter. The slogan of organized labor, 'United We Stand, Divided We Fall,' must be adhered to, and, in the language of the Bible, 'Those who are not with us are against us.'

The other important resolution which showed the convention's attitude towards Communism declared that a well-organized and well-financed movement was in existence which was attempting to destroy by dissension and turmoil the United Mine Workers of America; it authorized the International Executive Board to appoint a committee to investigate this movement in an attempt to discover the source of its finances; and it directed "that if it be found that any of our officers or members are guilty of aiding or abetting in this conspiracy and if the conspiracy was financed by Communists or non-union coal operators' money, that such of our officers

or members who participated in the movement shall be tried under the law of our union and if found guilty they shall be suspended, expelled, or fined to an extent in accordance with the gravity of their offense."<sup>53</sup> The convention also asserted in a resolution that the Communist Party was a dual organization, being industrial as well as political, and sustained a committee report recommending the amendment of the constitution so as to keep out communists and to expel any member who espoused communistic tendencies.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., Feb. 15, 1927, pp. 9-10.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., Feb. 15, 1927, p. 4.

## CHAPTER IV

## AMALGAMATED CLOTHING WORKERS OF AMERICA

The history of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America is one of daring and successful struggles, which have made for the organization a nation-wide reputation. During its existence it has fought battles that other organizations, much older and richer, would not have undertaken. Its aggressiveness, vigor, fighting capacity, and thorough democracy account for its phenomenal growth and success.

In 1891 the United Garment Workers, of which the Amalgamated is an outgrowth, was established. The older organization, though still in existence, is no longer a factor in the clothing industry. It failed both in organizing the men's clothing workers of the country and in holding the confidence of its members. The strike of 1913 proved the turning point in the history of the clothing workers' attempts at organization. In that year the members began to build strong local unions in the men's clothing field against the wishes of the general officers, who feared an increasing, aggressive, and militant membership. The general officers excluded almost all of the men's clothing workers delegates from the biennial convention, held in October, 1914, in Nashville, Tennessee. At least seventy per cent. of the membership was thus disfranchised. The delegates who were allowed to take their seats were almost without exception from local unions of overalls workers.

The delegates who had been refused admission to the convention, as well as some of those who had been seated, declared themselves to be the United Garment Workers, and held their own convention in the same city. They elected officers and established complete machinery to carry on the work of the organization.<sup>1</sup> The American Federation of Labor convention of 1914, which met in Philadelphia, declared the insurgent

<sup>1</sup> The New Unionism, by J. M. Budish and G. Soule, 88.

group a dual union, and refused to consider their appeal for recognition. The newly formed organization continued to exist under the name of the United Garment Workers of America until the convention of December 26-28, 1914, when the name "Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America" was adopted, because of litigation begun by the officials of the original United Garment Workers. The Clothing Workers adopted a democratic constitution, and united with the Tailors' Industrial Union, which had formerly been known as the Journeyman Tailors' Union. The tailors' union later withdrew, however, and renewed its affiliation with the Federation.<sup>2</sup>

At the present time the Amalgamated is organized in the form of an industrial union, and upon a democratic basis. It has been very active in socialist campaigns and has contributed greatly toward the Socialist political victories of recent years.<sup>3</sup> Until 1924 the Workers' Party had nothing but praise for the leadership of the Amalgamated. In May of that year Robert Minor, a prominent member of the Workers' Party, and at that time one of the editors of the "Daily Worker," in an address to the Philadelphia convention of the Amalgamated, spoke of "the tremendous thrill of joy and pride" which speaking before the Amalgamated Union gave him, since he believed that their organization was "connected in some manner with the great ultimate destiny, the labor movement." The Amalgamated Union, he said, "broad" in spirit, "militant" in action, "deserved to be written forever upon the roll of the world" because of accomplishments which indicated its spirit,—"the 44 hour week; the annual 100% International Labor Day (May Day) which is in actuality a day of celebration of International Labor solidarity; the commitment of the Amalgamated at their biennial convention in 1922 to independent political action—a pioneer step; and their activity and initiative in going to the rescue of the first Workers' Republic on earth, Soviet Russia."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>3</sup> The American Labor Year Book, 1919-1920, pp. 177-185.

<sup>4</sup> Proceedings of the Sixth Convention of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, 282-285.

The leaders of the Amalgamated assert that the explanation of the change in attitude of the Workers' Party towards them lies in the participation of the Amalgamated in the Cleveland Convention for Progressive Political Action (July 4, 1924), and subsequently in the La Follette presidential campaign. The Workers' Party, the Amalgamated leaders declare, opposed the La Follette movement because they could not turn it into a movement for the organization of a labor party, to be dominated by the Workers' Party. Since the presidential campaign of 1924, the Workers' Party has constantly attacked the leaders of the Amalgamated. It has blamed them for wage reductions and readjustments, and charged that they have failed to protect the jobs and rights of the workers. The union administration, on the other hand, has pointed out that the very same radical leaders who, in 1922, had eulogized the Amalgamated, and who, in 1921, had accepted the ten per cent. wage decrease as inevitable, had nothing but abuse for the union leaders in 1924 and 1925, when the union was obliged to accept a temporary defeat in some places.<sup>5</sup>

Most of the opposition to the administration of the union has been in the New York local unions, which, the administration declared, were dominated by the Workers' Party.<sup>6</sup> The New York organization, now referred to by the administration as "The Sick Man of the Amalgamated," is the largest in the union, and represents what is probably the most important center of the men's clothing industry.<sup>7</sup> The contest of the New York local unions was made the central point in the struggle between the socialists and the communists. The general officers, instead of taking sides, tried to encourage coöperation between the opposing groups and a "coalition government" was established. The coalition received the support of the general administration, and proved to be fairly successful, particularly in the 1924 strike.

<sup>5</sup> Report of the General Executive Board to the Seventh Convention of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, 57.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

On July 25, 1924, however, President Hillman emphasized the need of peace in New York. In November, 1924, after the St. Paul session of the General Executive Board, he declared open war on factionalism, denouncing the attitude of members of the New York Joint Board, in the following words:

We refused to be a party to any single group or combination of groups. We will no longer deal with a 'good' league or a 'fine' council. . . . Our experience has been that neither faction has the interests of the Amalgamated at heart. . . . We recognize the impossibility of carrying on any constructive organization work if factionalism continues. It is not a question of working peacefully with the factions or working otherwise—it is a question of working through the organization or working otherwise. . . . The only program to which the General Office will ever be a party is a program that will be Amalgamated and Amalgamated Only.<sup>8</sup>

In December, 1924, the New York Joint Board adopted a resolution requesting the local unions to send a specified number of delegates who would "assume responsibility for carrying on the work of the organization" until March 18, 1925. The Joint Board thus organized was "to make the necessary plans and rules for making effective the organization program laid down by President Hillman to the end that order and effective work shall again be restored in New York."<sup>9</sup> The reconstituted Joint Board went into session on December 20, 1924, prominent members of the political factions appearing as delegates from the local unions. The general office made no objection to this, but notice was served that "the General Office will not only resent, but will definitely take all action within its power against any outside groups meddling with our union affairs," and it was made clear that "if people of either faction won't line up with the organization program, we will accommodate them and let them step out of the organization."<sup>10</sup>

It was suggested that the charters of local unions particu-

<sup>8</sup> The Advance, Dec. 5, 1924, pp. 1-2.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, Dec. 19, 1924, pp. 1-2.

<sup>10</sup> The Report of the General Executive Board to the Seventh Convention of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, 49.

larly infested with factionalism be revoked. To this Hillman replied:

I hope we will not have to revoke charters. I do not like it regardless of how much it may appeal to some. I do not believe it is necessary. I believe the membership stands fully on a program of constructive work. I should like to have every member of the organization know that disorder or sabotage in the organization will not be allowed; and that no man or any group of men will be big enough to get away with obstructing work of the organization.

By this time Coat Operators' Local Union No. 5 had become the operating base of the Trade Union Educational League in its open warfare against the leadership of the Amalgamated. The general officers charged that the Executive Board of that local union had subordinated itself to the League in a campaign of attacks upon the organization. At the meeting in February, 1925, the General Executive Board issued a statement reviewing the case and announcing its decision. In the statement the Board recounted the objectionable activities of the Executive Board of Local Union No. 5, reciting its attacks upon the officers of the New York Joint Board, and upon the national organization, and referring to its circulars, newspaper articles, and mass meetings, by means of which disloyal statements were disseminated among the workers. The General Executive Board charged that the Executive Board of the local union had usurped the functions of the Joint Board and had ordered a strike, by this action greatly adding to the difficulties with which the officers of the Joint Board were confronted. On another occasion the Joint Board, after consideration of a circular issued by Local Union No. 5, suspended the representatives of the local union pending an investigation. It was charged, that for two years before the investigation, the officials of Local Union No. 5 had been in office without any election being held, and that during the investigation they held an election, without previous nominations or proper notice, and had had themselves reelected.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp. 50-51.

In view of these facts the General Executive Board ordered:

1. The suspension of Samuel Lipzin, William Abrams, and L. Nelson, members of the Executive Board of Local Union No. 5, the men to have no right to attend meetings or to participate in official activities during the suspension. The General Office was empowered to impose such discipline on other members of the local union as the interests of the organization might require.

2. That the Executive Board be suspended from their duties as officers of the local union.

3. That the General Office assign a man to assume full control over the conduct of the local union, until a return to normal procedure was justified.<sup>12</sup>

The leaders of Local Union No. 5 now sought to influence groups outside of New York, and selected Chicago as the scene of their activity. There the members of the left wing attempted to set the workers against the administration by giving their version of the New York episode, and by declaring that the officers had wrecked the union. They distributed leaflets and called a mass meeting, which the suspended New York members were to address. In a report to the General Executive Board, Dr. Leo Wolman, the union's economic adviser, described these and subsequent events as follows:

The day President Hillman arrived in Chicago to begin negotiations with the employees for the renewal of the agreement, several members of the Amalgamated were found distributing in the shops the same circulars that were distributed by Local 5 in New York some time ago. These members were called to Manager Levin's office and, when they admitted distributing the leaflets, were ordered removed from their jobs.

On Friday, March 10, 1925, a second circular was distributed. This circular purported to come from the suspended members. It called the members of the Amalgamated to a meeting in Temple Hall, at 8 P. M., Monday, March 23, for the purpose of discussing the policy of the organization and condemning the suspension of these members. Manager Levin was, in the circular, invited to come and address the meeting.

Manager Levin, who came to the meeting with me, went with

<sup>12</sup> The Advance, Feb. 20, 1925, p. 2.

Charles Burr, the financial secretary of the Chicago Joint Board, to the manager of the hall and asked him to open it. He refused. The hall, he said, had been rented for the evening by the Workers' Party. They had made a deposit, and he would not open until they paid the balance. A committee from the Workers' Party then appeared and paid the balance; but they refused to cover any damages to the hall. Burr offered not only to pay for the hall, but also assumed the responsibility for any possible damage to the hall. The manager refused to accept this offer because he had already been paid for the hall by the Workers' Party. He, therefore, refused to open the hall.<sup>13</sup>

Shortly after 8 p. m. the Chicago Joint Board rented the Carmen's hall, and held a mass meeting, the number of workers present, Dr. Wolman estimated, being almost 2,500.<sup>14</sup> A resolution denouncing the activities of Local Union No. 5 and the distribution of the leaflets, and approving the action of Manager Levin of the Chicago Joint Board in removing workers from their jobs was adopted without a dissenting voice. The members of the left wing refused to attend this meeting. The union administration asserted that the Workers' Party did not wish to open Temple Hall because of the presence of the great mass of Amalgamated members, who were not in sympathy with the communists. When a large gathering of Amalgamated members attended, the Workers' Party, the administration declared, decided to retreat. The Chicago trouble culminated on April 7, 1925, in the expulsion from Local Union No. 39 of seven left wing leaders.<sup>15</sup>

The members of the left wing now renewed their activity in New York, and on April 22, 1925, 2,000 of its members raided the general headquarters of the Amalgamated. Three days later they staged a demonstration in Union Square in front of the building in which the offices of the Amalgamated are located. This demonstration was broken up by the police.<sup>16</sup> The union administration charged that the raid and demonstration were led by former officers and spokesmen of Local Union No. 5, and that the publicity and other

<sup>13</sup> The Report of the General Executive Board to the Seventh Convention of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, 53-54.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>15</sup> The American Labor Year Book, 1926, p. 136.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 298.

preparatory work had been carried on by the *Freiheit*, the official daily paper of the Workers' Party and the Trade Union Educational League. Dr. Wolman in his report asserted that "a number of the authoritative leaders of the raiding group claim that the union, as it is administered and led today, has ceased to be useful to the members, and it is the duty of the members who have the good of the organization at heart to smash the union." He quoted a prominent member of Local Union No. 5 as saying, "We shall rather go to the United Garment Workers than stand for such an Amalgamated as it is today;" and a former officer of the local union as saying, "We shall break the organization even if it takes a year or two."<sup>17</sup>

In its leaflets, the left wing alleged that the administration in making agreements was pursuing a policy of "class collaboration," that the officers discriminated against left wing members, that free expression of opinion was not permitted in the union, and that the organization was losing its militant, class-conscious character. The radicals demanded direct negotiations with the employers through elected committees; reinstatement of expelled members; a more militant policy; unemployment insurance maintained solely by the employers, with union administration of its funds; and amalgamation of the New York Joint Boards in the men's and children's clothing industries.<sup>18</sup> The Workers' Party also charged that working conditions, instead of improving, had been continually growing worse, and that the union leadership was responsible for this.<sup>19</sup>

All this disturbance within the Amalgamated weakened the control which the union had over working conditions in the New York market. A number of firms openly violated the terms of the market agreement, and work was freely sent to open shops. Impartial Chairman Jacob Billikopf felt obliged

<sup>17</sup> The Report of the General Executive Board to the Seventh Convention of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, 58-59.

<sup>18</sup> The American Labor Year Book, 1926, p. 136.

<sup>19</sup> Daily Worker, Nov. 23, 1926.

to serve notice upon the firms thus violating the agreement.<sup>20</sup> Despite the efforts of the Impartial Chairman, the International Tailoring Company and the J. L. Taylor Company refused to deal with the Amalgamated, and on June 26, 1925 the strike against these manufacturers began.<sup>21</sup>

The Amalgamated Joint Action Committee, which the left wing had organized after the officials of Local Union No. 5 had been suspended, attempted to array the New York local unions against the leadership of the Amalgamated. They called upon the members to refuse to allow an increase in the weekly dues, which the administration regarded as a vital necessity. They rendered impossible the collection of an assessment for the conduct of the strike against the International Tailoring Company. The administration asserted that the Committee consisted of several members of Local Union No. 5, who had been suspended because of their left wing activities, together with several persons who had at the time no relation to the union or to the industry. The administration accused the Committee of acting as a dual union, in that it collected dues in the form of assessments, and negotiated with the employers. About this time the members of the left wing in the New York organization of the International Ladies Garment Workers won a bitter internal struggle. The Amalgamated Joint Action Committee capitalized this victory, pointing to it as an indication of success. On November 6, 1925, however, the International Tailoring Company and the J. L. Taylor Company signed an agreement with the Amalgamated. The Joint Action Committee, however, declared that the victory claimed by the union officials was in reality a failure.

The New York situation was the major problem before the session of the General Executive Board, which began on December 18, 1925. The Board reaffirmed the neutrality of the Amalgamated in political matters. It declared, however, that "the union views the group that is now leading the

<sup>20</sup> The Advance, May, 1925, p. 3.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., July 3, 1925, p. 1.

opposition in New York not as a right or left movement in the Amalgamated but as a group organized by outsiders for the purpose of wrecking the Amalgamated." The Board asserted that the movement was nothing less than dual unionism. The group, it charged, had sent representatives to employers with whom the general organization was negotiating to show that the Amalgamated was divided. "Fortunately the membership had quickly shown them that no interference would be tolerated." In New York City, the Board said:

"The organization must definitely look upon these groups as enemies and the membership must realize the danger to their interests and to the interests of the organization of any policy that will permit these activities to continue. It must treat with these groups in such a manner that the membership will know that they have no place in the organization, and the employers will know that they have not sufficient strength to give aid and comfort to them when there is trouble with the organization. The Amalgamated, as in the past, will permit freedom of opinion and speech in its ranks, but it must stamp out activities that have for their purpose the destruction of the organization."<sup>22</sup>

The General Executive Board designated three of its members, Hyman Blumberg, August Bellanca, and Sam Rissman, to remain in New York and put into effect the program of reorganization upon which it had decided.<sup>23</sup> Several weeks later the General Office appointed Abraham Beckerman manager of the New York Joint Board, and the two Joint Boards in the men's and children's clothing industries were merged and reorganized. Under the new system, fewer officers were required, and the services of a number of officers, who had been in sympathy with the "left wing," were dispensed with.

On January 16, 1926, the Joint Action Committee called a mass meeting at Cooper Union to protest against the policies of the union administration. A large number of followers of the administration also came to the hall. For this reason the Committee did not open Cooper Hall. The

<sup>22</sup> The Report of the General Executive Board to the Seventh Convention of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, 66-67.

<sup>23</sup> The Advance, Jan. 1, 1926, p. 2.

meeting, however, was held in Webster Hall, and, as the Committee had feared, it was dominated by the supporters of the administration. The members of the left wing held another meeting at Manhattan Hall to protest against the policies of the General Executive Board, but this meeting also was turned into a pro-administration demonstration. After this failure the Joint Action Committee virtually ceased to exist.<sup>24</sup>

In the meantime there had been further developments in Chicago. The left wing there nominated Nathan Green for the office of manager of the Chicago Joint Board in opposition to Sam Levin, who was a candidate for reelection. During the campaign three of Green's active supporters lost their places as workers, and the left wing charged that Levin caused their dismissal. Levin was reelected by a vote of 13,276 to 1,390.<sup>25</sup> In Rochester the General Executive Board suspended Peter Teem and A. Sugarman, active members of the left wing, and adopted measures to eliminate the antagonism between the nationalities. The Italian element, the union officials believed, had been made use of by the left wing in its efforts to awaken dissatisfaction. The program adopted was therefore chiefly designed to satisfy the Italian element. Their local unions were given autonomy and a more than proportional representation on the Joint Board; also the compulsory use of English in certain Jewish branches, where the Italians were in a minority, was required.

The biennial convention of the Amalgamated was held in Montreal, May 10-15, 1926. The convention congratulated the New York market on its recovery, approved of joint action, including amalgamation of needle trades unions; and expressed its desire that a labor party be established in the United States. Spirited debates occurred on the resolutions relating to amnesty for suspended members, establishment of a labor party, amalgamation, and freedom of expression

<sup>24</sup> The Report of the General Executive Board to the Seventh Convention of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, 72.

<sup>25</sup> The American Labor Year Book, 1926, p. 136.

through the official organs of the union. The left wing was unsuccessful in its plea for amnesty, the administration declaring that only a few members had been suspended, and that the official channels of appeal were open to them. The members of the Board defended their actions with reference to amalgamation of the needle trades and the establishment of a labor party, asserting that they had done everything possible under the circumstances. They denied that the official organs were closed to the free discussion of problems relating to the organization.

The left wing candidates for membership on the General Executive Board were defeated in a referendum held during the year. Those having the best support, A. Capraro, and J. Platti, received 6,773 and 5,862 votes respectively, whereas the lowest winner, Marcovitz, was given 15,363 votes. President Hillman and General Secretary-treasurer Schlossberg were reelected without opposition.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 1927, pp. 87-88.



## CHAPTER V

## THE FURRIERS' UNION

The first union of the furriers in the United States was the "Kirshner Union," organized in New York in 1883. The members were mostly German cutters. In 1884, the "Fur Dressers Union of Brooklyn," comprising only fleshers and shavers, was formed. No other labor unions in the fur trade were formed until 1903, when an effort was made to combine all branches of the industry in New York City into one organization. A union was formed; but, with the exception of a few shop strikes, little advance was made. In 1907, the operators, on their own initiative, brought about a reorganization on craft lines. The organization of local unions of finishers, nailers, and cutters followed shortly. The affairs of the central union were conducted by a joint executive committee. In this manner, its activities were increased and in many cases, with beneficial results. The employers, fearing the growing strength of the union, formed a protective association, and although many firms had verbal agreements with the union, began a lockout. In retaliation, the union declared a general strike, which was broken after four weeks duration. The dissolution of the union followed.<sup>1</sup> All efforts to reorganize were ineffective until 1913, when an organization including all crafts in the industry was formed, and its affiliation with the American Federation of Labor secured.<sup>2</sup> At the present time the union has about 12,000 members, two-thirds of whom are members of Local Unions 1, 5, 10, and 15, which comprise the New York Joint Board. As the remaining 4,000 workers are scattered throughout the United States and Canada, it is evident that the New York Joint Board must exert a very powerful influence upon the International Fur Workers' Union.

<sup>1</sup> The Fur Worker, May, 1919, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> The American Labor Year Book, 1926, p. 143.

The beginning of organized opposition within the union may be dated as far back as 1919. In that year a group of radicals made an effort to organize "councils," and to introduce a shop steward movement. The leaders of the union were denounced, and members were urged to withdraw from the union. The avowed aim of the insurgents was the destruction of the existing organization, and the substitution for it of a more radical body. About the same time, a campaign was inaugurated in the local unions against the business agents of the New York Joint Board. The charges were soon aired at the meetings of the Joint Board, and of the local unions. A committee, after investigation, found the accusations groundless, and suggested that a public apology should be made through the official organ of the union by those concerned.<sup>3</sup> The latter, however, failed to make public acknowledgment of their error.

Kaufman, the manager of the Joint Board, in defending the business agents, in turn, incurred the criticism of the radicals. In the midst of the disturbance, Kaufman tendered his resignation. This quickly set opposite currents of thought into motion. Even his critics admitted that they had overshot their mark. Long discussions ensued at the Joint Board meetings, and many influences were brought to bear on Kaufman to induce him to reconsider his decision. Finally, a sort of peace was patched up, and the Joint Board pledged itself to set aside personal differences and to work in harmony.<sup>4</sup> This peace, however, was of short duration. In January, 1920, an election of the members of the Joint Board took place, and the radicals were seated. For three months an organized filibuster was maintained at the sessions of the Joint Board, and all of the acts and motives of the manager were subjected to close scrutiny. The possibility of effective resistance by Kaufman was blocked by the fact that the Joint Board had the last word in local matters, and that no general meeting of the members could be called without the board's

<sup>3</sup> The Fur Worker, Sept. 1919, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., Oct. 1919, p. 6.

sanction. Therefore, in March, 1920, Kaufman resigned from the managership of the New York Joint Board, continuing, however, as president of the union.

The leaders of the Joint Board, wearied by this time, made efforts to recall Kaufman. Numerous committees, officials, and individuals joined in an effort to persuade him to return to office. The strife in the local board, in the meantime, weakened the union. Non-union workrooms sprang up like mushrooms. Finally, it was decided that each of the board members should resign. The formal announcement of these resignations was made at a general meeting of the members at Webster's Hall, on March 30, 1920. However, the majority of the Joint Board apparently regretted their action and a number of them renewed their former tactics at the meeting. One of them moved for the rejection of the resignation of the members of the Joint Board. Despite this, by an overwhelming majority, the resignations were accepted, and the local unions were directed to elect a new Joint Board during the following week. Coincidentally, a vote of confidence in the Kaufman administration was adopted, and the members of the old board were barred from candidacy for the new one.<sup>5</sup> A new Joint Board, consisting of adherents of the right wing, was then elected.

In the election of the New York Joint Board in the early part of 1921, the left wing was able to regain control in the board, but remained in power only about a year, when in July 1922, they were defeated.<sup>6</sup> After this defeat the left wing organized the so-called "Furriers section" of the Trade Union Educational League. They concentrated their opposition in Local Unions 1 and 15. Here, still in control of the executive boards, although defeated in the elections, they refused to vacate office, and launched a campaign against the Joint Board. Through the medium of the communist paper *Freiheit*, they accused the Joint Board of terrorizing the membership. The Board decided to force the editor to prove

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., April 1920, p. 8.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., Dec. 1922, p. 6.

his case in court. He, however, proposed a committee selected from the labor movement. The president of the International Union denied this request in the following statement:

Please understand that the tens of thousands of organized Jewish Workers in the unions, the Workmen's Circle, and Socialist and progressive elements in general, refuse to stand with you, and will have nothing whatever to do with you. One goes to a court of the labor movement with one who believes in labor ethics and organization morals. You were never brought up to such ethics. Your sheet has never had them because it has been established to destroy labor organizations.<sup>7</sup>

Charges and countercharges were freely made during the years 1922-1924. The adherents of the right wing asserted that since the ousting of the left wing administration in 1922, greater power and influence had been attained. They claimed that, at the beginning of 1924, when terms of a new agreement were discussed with the employers, the members of the left wing circulated the wildest rumors, called meetings to protest against the administration, broke into assembly rooms where they were not wanted, interfered with union meetings, and used acts of terror and violence for the purpose of dissolving the union and destroying its protective power over the workers' interests. The leaders of the right wing asserted that misleading reports to the effect that proper discussion was prevented had been circulated. They further asserted that three meetings of shop chairmen, and eight meetings of Local Unions 1, 5, 10 and 15, comprising the New York Joint Board, had been held for discussion and that the left wing leaders were present at the sessions and participated in the discussions. The spreading of these rumors, despite the fact that the proposals were unanimously accepted as the basis for negotiations with the manufacturers at the meetings of the shop chairmen on December 17, 1923, of the cutters on December 20, of the nailers on December 20, and of the operators on December 26, was characterized by the right wing supporters as malicious. Local Union No. 15 was the only one that refused its approval.<sup>8</sup> The right wing

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., May, 1924, p. 9.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., Jan. 1924, p. 5.

asserted that under the "left" rule of the New York Joint Board in 1921-1922, the first meeting to apprise the workers of the fact that the employers wanted to wrest from them previously-won concessions was not called until January 20, 1922. In reply to the denunciation of their leaders for seeking the coöperation of the employers in the solution of trade problems the "right" faction stressed the imperative need of the coöperation of both parties to insure the proper enforcement of the agreement. The claim was also advanced that under the left administration, in 1921-1922, the employers were discouraged and depressed, and were always on the alert to disregard the agreement. The administration maintained that even though the agreement of 1924 was not the best obtainable, it was fair, and that in substance it was identical with that of 1922. The claim was also made that when the agreement of 1922 was made, the communists, then in full control of the union, celebrated it as a great event and hailed it as a significant victory.

In 1923, the campaign against the radicals opened. Suroff, the tenth vice-president was suspended by the General Executive Board, because of the nature of an article that he had printed against the New York Joint Board officials in a Communist paper.<sup>9</sup> His appeal to the sixth convention of the union, held in Chicago, May 12-17, 1924, was ineffective and the General Executive Board was sustained. A special resolution was then carried against the Trade Union Educational League. Members were forbidden to affiliate with dual or hostile organizations such as the League and the Workers' Party.

In 1925, after a period of passive resistance, the left wing opposition became active again. The "progressive" elements in the union united with the communists to protest against expulsions and organized the so-called United Front Committee, which adopted the following program:

1. A pledge to exert all the power of the union in an

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., May, 1924, p. 8.

effort to prevent the acts of violence and terror that had prevailed therein under the former administration.

2. The introduction of a complete democratic management, the assurance of the full right and privilege to members to exchange opinions and offer free criticism, and also the full responsibility of the administration for organization activity.

3. The induction of the membership at large into union activity, and the removal of those guilty or suspected of violating union principles.

4. The recognition of any member's right to affiliate with any political party.

5. A pledge to concentrate the strength of all union members to insure and improve the economic condition of the fur workers.<sup>10</sup>

The administration in return denounced the committee's activities as causing dissension and division, and charged the members of the left wing with violation of the union's constitution; with agitation against collective agreements with the employers; and finally, with the directing of unwarranted union strikes. The supporters of the administration further declared that the "United Front" opposed the International Union because the officers of the latter did not hold the communist dogma. The "United Front" alleged suppression of opinion by violence, graft, and official corruption.<sup>11</sup> The left wing succeeded in gaining control of the New York Joint Board, and retained it in the elections of May, 1925.<sup>12</sup>

Among the many demands of the left wing, the leading one was for a special National Convention to settle all the questions at issue between the New York Joint Board and the National administration. On the other hand, the officers of the International Union charged the left wing with disruptive tactics, inefficient administration, and mismanagement of

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., June, 1925, p. 6.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., April, 1925, p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> The American Labor Year Book, 1926, p. 144.

funds in the allotment of ten thousand dollars to the "Joint Committee of Action" of the cloakmakers which was in revolt against the International Ladies Garment Workers.<sup>13</sup> In reference to the last charge, President Kaufman publicly declared that the donation would not have been sanctioned by a referendum vote of the membership. He further stated that the Cloakmakers' Union had assisted in the building up of the New York Furriers' Union, and had offered financial aid in all of the struggles of the latter. He advanced the opinion also, that the Furriers' Union should have aided their benefactors rather than their opponents, who under communist influence sought to cause a cleavage in the ranks. This donation of \$10,000 to the "Joint Committee," the administration asserted, was advanced to promote a split.<sup>14</sup> In reply, the left wing leaders claimed that the \$10,000 was not a donation but a temporary loan to the real representatives of the cloakmakers unions, the "Joint Action Committee."

In the meantime, the International officials declared the New York elections of May 23 unconstitutional because they had been held two months before the time specified in the Furriers' constitution, and charged that two of those elected to the Board at that time were under suspension from the union.<sup>15</sup>

The failure of the New York Joint Board properly to support the Montreal strike was also alleged as evidence of disloyalty.<sup>16</sup> In reply, the left faction pleaded that the Joint Board would have given more hearty support if it had been allowed a voice in the conduct of the strike. In an article published in *Freiheit*, the spokesman of the left wing asserted:<sup>17</sup> "The International Union would use the thousands of dollars coming from the Joint Board for the strike to hinder organization work in New York. Kaufman does not care about the strike; he does not want to help the strikers. All Kaufman wants is to get more and more money to carry on the fight against the Joint Board."

<sup>13</sup> The Fur Worker, Aug., 1925, p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., Sept., 1925, pp. 4-5.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., May, 1925, pp. 1-2.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., July, 1925, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> Freiheit, Aug. 31, 1925.

At Boston in November, 1925, an emergency convention was convened. At this session, the balance of power between the administration supporters and the communists was in the hands of the so-called "progressive" group, which had commonly cast its lot with the radicals. A fight against the seating of Benjamin Gold, a communist leader from New York, failed.<sup>18</sup> In addition, a telegram purporting to have been sent by C. E. Ruthenberg, secretary of the Workers' Party of America, to William Weinstock, a reporter at the convention for the *Daily Worker*, in which the steps to be taken by the communists were suggested, was read to prove the communist control of the left wing.<sup>19</sup> The Workers' Party, however, denied the authorship of this telegram, and an investigating committee failed to determine the responsibility for it. A straddling resolution advanced by the Executive Board, justifying the International Union in its action against the New York Joint Board but exonerating the latter from the charges of violating the constitution, was passed. Following this, a struggle developed over the report of the General Executive Board. The radicals objected to the injunction obtained by the Furriers' Union against the Millman firm in Boston. Dissatisfaction was also voiced with the South Norwalk agreement, which was to be in force for five years, and which provided for no chairman. The Board's report, however, was adopted by a vote of thirty-eight, thirty-five of the delegates withholding their votes. Motions to endorse the communist organs, *Freiheit* and the *Daily Worker*, were defeated.

The newly elected executive board included two communists, four progressives, four old administration supporters, and two unattached members. Feeling that reelection was impossible, President Kaufman withdrew his candidacy. Ozier Schachtman, former secretary-treasurer of the New York Joint Board, and a progressive, with the support of the left wing—which itself had not the strength to elect its own nominee—was

<sup>18</sup> The Fur Worker, Nov.-Dec., 1925, p. 2.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

elected president without opposition. The vice-presidency fell to Isidor Winneck, who by a vote of 41 to 29, defeated Benjamin Gold, the communist leader. The latter, however, was elected a delegate to the 1926 convention of the American Federation of Labor. All in all, the convention may be characterized as non-decisive.

The most important clash between the union and the employers came with the expiration on January 1, 1926, of the agreement between the New York Joint Board and the manufacturers. The Joint Board, controlled by the communists, presented the following demands to the association: (1) forty hour week; (2) thirty-two hour week during slack time; (3) equal division of work during the year; (4) unemployment insurance fund to be raised by contribution from the manufacturers at the rate of three per cent. of wages paid, and the distribution to be entirely in the hands of the union; (5) a twenty-five per cent. increase in wages over the existing minimum scale of wages; (6) union labels on all skins; (7) no overtime work; (8) miscellaneous requests.<sup>20</sup> These demands were rejected by the employers, who were divided into the United Fur Manufacturers, the Greek Fur Manufacturers' Association, and the Associated Fur Manufacturers, Inc. The last named had in its membership the dominant and financially powerful manufacturers, and in time, was successful in uniting all the groups. This association declared a lock-out of the workers. In retaliation, the New York Joint Board called a strike of all the employees in the shops of the three employers' associations; it began February 15, 1926, and tied up the industry.

The strike was carried on with militancy, and resulted in the arrests of hundreds of workers. Financial aid was secured from the needle trade unionists, and a donation of twenty-five thousand dollars from the Amalgamated Clothing Workers was obtained.

The communists soon came into conflict with the Interna-

<sup>20</sup> The Workers' Monthly, July, 1926, p. 406.

tional officers. When the strike reached its ninth week, the International officers took steps to assume the leadership. These attempts were followed by demonstrations against the *Jewish Daily Forward*, which had printed news to the effect that the workers were dissatisfied with the strike leaders, and the communist management of the strike; and had proposed that Abraham Beckerman, member of the right wing, manager of the New York Joint Board of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, should undertake the conduct of the strike. Patriotic demonstrations were also held in front of the *Freiheit* building. The right wing supporters invited President Green, of the American Federation of Labor, to address the strikers at a mass meeting at Carnegie Hall on April 16, 1926. Along with the invitations to this meeting, the International officials enclosed a ballot and asked the strikers to permit the International Union to put an end to the strike by accepting satisfactory conditions.<sup>21</sup> The communists accused their opponents of using President Green in an effort to oust Benjamin Gold and the New York Joint Board from the leadership of the strike. The strikers attended the meeting in mass, but some of the well known members of the left wing, among them Gold and Gross, one of the vice-presidents of the International, were barred by the police.

The left wing strike committee had in the meantime issued a declaration, expressing their desire to accept satisfactory proposals for a settlement, provided that the workers themselves made the final decision on the acceptance of these terms. At the meeting, the strikers demanded the admission of Gold, and after a demonstration lasting an hour, forced an adjournment.<sup>22</sup> After this expression of the strikers' opinion, President Green made peace with the New York Joint Board and endorsed the strike. Later, on May 22, 1926, the strike leaders called a meeting at the Madison Square Garden to inaugurate a national campaign for a forty-hour week for

<sup>21</sup> The Fur Worker, April, 1926, pp. 1-2.

<sup>22</sup> The Workers' Monthly, July, 1926, p. 408.

all workers in the needle trades industry.<sup>23</sup> At this meeting both the secretary of the New York Central Trades and Labor Councils and the president of The State Federation of Labor were present. Subsequently, another meeting was held at the 69th regiment armory, at which President Green and Gold spoke. At this time the eight points of the proposed agreement with the employers, endorsed by Green and the right wing, were presented: (1) the use of the old agreement as the basis for the new settlement; (2) elimination of as much overtime work as possible; (3) a three-year agreement; (4) no apprentices to be taken from February 1, 1926, to February 19, 1928; (5) no sub-contracting; (6) a ten per cent. increase of wages over the existing scale; (7) one minimum wage scale instead of two at the end of two years; (8) a forty-two hour week.<sup>24</sup> The workers rejected these proposals.

When President Green came to New York a few weeks later to settle the strike on the basis of the eight points, he failed, and in severing negotiations, declared for the forty-hour week, the chief demand of the New York Joint Board. The manufacturers declared that the strike did not involve trade union questions; that the leaders of the strike represented the communists and not the great body of the workers; that the demands presented were not in the interest of the workers but in that of the communists; and that the strike was being engineered and financed by Moscow. At the same time the *Jewish Daily Forward* charged the Communist leaders with being more interested in championing their own political views than in fighting for the workers' demands, and declared that the demands made on the manufacturers by the Communist strike were so utopian that the relinquishment of the shops to the workers without compensation might as well have been asked.

After seventeen weeks, on June 11, 1926, the strike was settled.<sup>25</sup> The terms led to considerable controversy. The

<sup>23</sup> The Fur Worker, May, 1926, pp. 1-2.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., April, 1926, p. 2.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., June, 1926, p. 1.

communist leaders and press claimed the victory,<sup>26</sup> while the right wing pointed out specific losses and saw only defeat.<sup>27</sup> The final agreement established was as follows: (1) a forty-hour and five day week; (2) no overtime except during the months of September, October, November and December, the manufacturers to have the privilege of requesting the employees to work four hours Saturday at extra time only; (3) no sub-contracting; (4) no discharge by manufacturers of workmen one week before holidays, in order to deprive the latter of holiday with pay; (5) no apprentices for two year period; (6) heavy penalty for violation of the agreement; (7) three legal holidays without pay during the months of January and February; (8) a ten per cent. increase. No provisions for an unemployment fund were made.<sup>28</sup> In addition an agreement was made that all strike breakers were to be discharged, and their future status determined by a special committee of the union. The left wing claimed that this concession was the first of that nature ever obtained by the union.

On July 19, 1926, the president of the American Federation of Labor appointed a committee consisting of the following: Mathew Woll, president of the Photo Engravers' Union, and vice-president of the Federation, as chairman; Edward F. McGrady, general organizer of the Federation, as secretary; John Sullivan, president of the N. Y. State Federation of Labor; Joseph Ryan, president of the N. Y. Central Labor Union; and Hugh Frayne, general organizer of the American Federation of Labor.<sup>29</sup> The committee was to investigate the relations between the General Executive Board of the International Union, and the New York Joint Board. In reply to President Green's announcement of the appointment of the committee, manager Gold, representing the Joint Board, questioned the need of investigating a successful strike and

<sup>26</sup> The Workers' Monthly, July, 1926, pp. 406-409.

<sup>27</sup> The Fur Worker, June, 1926, pp. 1, 2, 6.

<sup>28</sup> The Daily Worker, June 14, 1926.

<sup>29</sup> The Fur Worker, Aug., 1926, pp. 1, 2, 3.

the power of the Federation to investigate the strike at all. The appointment of the committee he regarded as a violation by the Federation of the autonomous rights of affiliated unions, and as an interference in the local affairs of an affiliated union. The New York Joint Board also proposed that it be allowed two members on the committee, and that committee hearings be conducted publicly. *Freiheit*, in its comment on the investigation said: "A strike-breaking gang has now made a new attempt . . . to investigate, and fix it all up."

In a letter dated August 9, to President Schachtman, President Green stated that in the event of a refusal to supply the investigating committee with the books, accounts, and records of the Joint Board during the recent strike, the president of the International could not only request but demand that the officers of the Joint Board supply him with all documents that pertained to the administrative and executive work of the International Union. In his reply of August 12, Schachtman gave assurance of the confidence of his organization in the committee, and stated his readiness to cooperate with and serve it. In a letter to Manager Gold, the president of the International recalled the agreement that had been concluded between the committees of the International and the Joint Board in the presence of President Green, to the effect that an investigation of affairs would be made when the strike was over. Also, he demanded any material that the chairman of the investigating committee might request. In the meantime manager Gold had made a second reply to Green. In this letter, he intimated that the Joint Board had decided to place before the investigators its books and documents "so that the American labor movement may learn how to conduct a strike." He also repeated his earlier arguments against the Federation's authority to investigate, and flatly denied that any agreement of the Joint Board had been made. Objection was made to the presence of Hugh Frayne on the committee, on the ground that, since he had presided at the Carnegie Hall meeting of

April 15, he was partial. In concluding, Gold declared it would be a dire calamity if the militant leadership were punished and discredited because of its success; and if this were done the Joint Board would appeal to the convention of the American Federation of Labor.

At the investigation of the committee of the Federation, the radicals were accused by the members of the right wing, (1) of conducting during the pre-strike period a campaign against local and International officers through the medium of an organization outside of the union known as the "Furriers' Section" of the Trade Union Educational League; (2) of creating the so-called "United Front" for the purpose of ousting the management of the union; (3) of "fixing" the ballot in the election of the Joint Board in July, 1926, so as to secure a Communist majority on the Board; (4) of openly defying and violating the laws of the International constitution; (5) of obtaining twenty-two of the thirty-two delegates to the International convention of November, 1925, by trickery and deceptive relations with the "United Front"; (6) of acting at the convention under the direct instructions of the Communist Party. In addition the members of the left wing were charged with having made the leaders of the Communists the actual heads of the union and the chief advisers of strike strategy during the strike; of having eliminated all non-Communist members from the councils of the strike committee.<sup>80</sup>

Among other complaints were: the expenditure of large sums of union funds on publicity and "protection" propaganda; the libel and slander of many individuals long in the service of the labor movement; and the unconstitutional founding of a body of shop-chairmen, with illegal powers of making strike decisions, and prescribing tax levies exercised in accordance with the suggestions of the Communist headquarters. The right wing also asserted that during the strike, anti-Communist strikers, and former local and General officers

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, Aug., 1926, p. 4.

and leaders were refused workers' cards, libelled, beaten, and often stopped or suspended from work without valid reason.

In January, 1927, the report on the internal affairs of the Furriers' Union by the American Federation of Labor investigating committee was published.<sup>31</sup> It was decidedly unfavorable to the Communist management of the New York Joint Board. The latter was severely criticized and branded with "bribery, debauchery, and flagrant dishonesty." The General Executive Board of the Furriers' Union at its session, January 14-18, 1927, in Montreal, expelled vice-president Gross, an avowed Communist, from membership.<sup>32</sup> In addition it requested the American Federation of Labor to assume virtual directorship of the activities of the Furriers' Union, offering at the same time, to the Executive Council of the Federation, all authority necessary to cope with the situation in New York.<sup>33</sup> President Green then appointed a special committee of the Federation to "rid the Furriers' Union of its communistic leadership and destructive influence." The first definite result of the work of this committee was the official notification from the International Union on March 3, 1927, to the New York Board and its allied local unions of their expulsion. Thirty-seven individuals including the members of the Board were also expelled.<sup>34</sup> The latter, through their spokesman, Manager Gold, declared the expulsion illegal, and intimated the refusal of the Board, and the members of Local Unions 1, 5, 10 and 15, which comprised it, to obey the order of the International to dissolve.<sup>35</sup> Thus the fur industry has been precipitated into a bitter struggle.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, Jan., 1927, pp. 3, 5, 8, 10, 11; Feb., 1927, pp. 5-8, March, 1927, pp. 5-7.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, Jan., 1927, p. 2.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, Feb., 1927, p. 4.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, March, 1927, pp. 1-2.

<sup>35</sup> *The Daily Worker*, March 4, 1927.

## CHAPTER VI

### INTERNATIONAL LADIES' GARMENT WORKERS' UNION

The earliest organizations among workers in the women's garment trades were shop unions and an assembly of the Knights of Labor, organized in 1882. Throughout the eighties there were occasional combinations of shop unions, usually under the leadership of the Knights of Labor, but attempts in this direction were of a local and sporadic nature. In May, 1892, a movement towards organization on a larger scale began, and delegates from the organized cloak makers of five cities met in New York and formed the International Cloak Makers' Union of America. This body was short-lived, however, and the period immediately following was characterized by factional strife and dual unionism along national, racial, and political lines. As a result of the chaotic conditions thus produced, many of the local organizations affiliated with the United Garment Workers. General strikes in 1894-1895 among the workers in the women's garment trades almost destroyed organization, and the only local union which retained any vitality during the next five years was the United Brotherhood of Cloak Makers of New York.

On June 3, 1900, a convention attended by delegates from unions in various branches of the industry was held in New York, and the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union was formed.<sup>1</sup> A Socialist constitution was adopted. The new organization immediately affiliated with the American Federation of Labor; it has retained this affiliation ever since, though it has often disapproved of the policies of the Federation. At present the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union consists of about 90,000 members.<sup>2</sup> Practically all of them are foreign-born, the majority being Jews and Italians, with some members of Slavonic descent.

<sup>1</sup> *The American Labor Year Book*, 1926, p. 138.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1927, p. 72.



The progress of the International was for some time hindered by a severe internal conflict, the beginnings of which may be traced back to the organization in 1917 of the Current Events Committee by a group of members of the New York Waist and Dress Makers' Union, Local 25. This committee denounced the officers of the local union and of the International as too conservative. Before the end of 1917 the Current Events Committee ceased to exist, but the radical members of the local union continued a semi-organized opposition to the leaders. In 1919 they organized the Workers' Council, soon followed by the so-called Welfare League. Societies and welfare leagues were also formed by dissatisfied members in several other local unions of the International during this period. These various leagues and committees remained dissociated until the fall of 1919, and confined their interest and activities to local issues.

A basis for a more widespread and coördinated radical movement was furnished in the fall of 1919 by a shop delegate movement, patterned after the English shop steward movement. Members of Local Union 25 organized a shop delegate league, the purpose of which was to make the shop the basis of union organization and control.<sup>3</sup> The workers in each shop, it was proposed, were to elect two delegates, who were to form the governing body of the local union. The assembly of shop delegates was to exercise both legislative and executive powers, and was to elect a general executive committee and standing committees.

The General Executive Board of the International looked upon the new idea as merely another manifestation of the "rank and file" movement in Local Union 25. It believed that Local Union 25 was so responsive to radical ideas because it was too large, and because it was composed of heterogeneous industrial elements—the radical waist-makers and the more conservative dressmakers. If these groups were separated, it was thought that the new movement could be more easily checked. For these reasons, President Schlesinger proposed

<sup>3</sup> Justice, May 20, 1921, p. 4.

that the two elements be separated, and the 1920 convention so decided, despite the opposition of the members of Local Union 25.<sup>4</sup> In the winter of 1920-1921, in accordance with the decision of the convention, New York Dress Makers' Union, Local 22, was established. Local Union 22 is now the largest local affiliated with the International.

The shop delegate movement, far from being checked by the forced division of Local Union 25, spread to other local unions of the International. Shop delegate leagues were formed in the newly established Local Union 22, and in Local Unions 1, 9, and a few others. A number of different elements in those local unions combined in support of the leagues. Communists, radical socialists, syndicalists, and anarchists believed that the shop delegate plan was the means by which a new and class conscious unionism could be produced.

The industrial depression of 1920-1921 provided the radicals in the International with a favorable opportunity for increasing their influence. A great many members, discontented by unemployment, lent their support to the group that criticized the conservative leaders. In a number of local unions, including 1, 9, and 22 of New York, and 2 and 15 of Philadelphia, and also in the Joint Boards of Philadelphia and Chicago, the radicals elected many of their members to offices, and in the elections of 1922 secured a majority on several local executive boards.

The 1922 convention of the International held in Cleveland was the scene of sharp conflicts between the supporters of the administration and the left wing. Objections were filed with the credentials committee against Delegates Eva Pasha, Benny Adler, Louis Hyman, and Sam Silverman, all of Local 9, and against the entire delegation from this local union.<sup>5</sup> The delegates, all of whom were of the "left wing" were charged with using their official positions in

<sup>4</sup> Report of the General Executive Board to the Sixteenth Convention of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, 50-51.

<sup>5</sup> Proceedings of the Sixteenth Convention of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, 26.

the organization to further the interest of themselves and their fellow candidates. The credentials committee reported that a thorough investigation of the charges necessitated an investigation of the entire local union. It therefore recommended that the delegation be seated, and that the incoming General Executive Board be instructed to make a thorough investigation of the whole matter.<sup>6</sup> This section of the committee's report was adopted unanimously, but the investigation was never made.

The crystallization of the "left" movement during 1921-1922 into Communistic forms, and its close connection with the Trade Union Educational League led also to dissension within the radical ranks. Many of the progressives and radicals, interested chiefly in the trade and organization aspects of the movement, became dissatisfied when political issues were stressed. On the other hand, the syndicalists, socialists, anarchists, and industrialists took steps to separate themselves from the Communists. During 1922 this dissociation was effected in a number of local unions. For these reasons it was materially easier for the General Executive Board to enforce the anti-League policy adopted in 1923.

President Schlesinger, who resigned on January 13, 1923,<sup>7</sup> had been somewhat irresolute in his attitude toward the League. His successor, Sigman, adopted a far more vigorous policy, and with the support of the General Executive Board declared an open war against the League and its followers.<sup>8</sup> On August 16, 1923, the Board declared the League to be a dual union, and membership in it to be therefore unconstitutional. It ruled that all "leagues" within the local unions must be dissolved, and that members of the International must cease activities in them.<sup>9</sup> As some locals and members refused to obey the ruling, the International on September 29, 1923, issued a second order to the same effect. At the same time the most active radicals in New York, Chicago,

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>7</sup> Justice, Jan. 19, 1923, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., Aug. 17, 1923, p. 6.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., Aug. 24, 1923, p. 1.

Philadelphia, and Boston were brought to trial before special committees of their local unions or joint boards; some of those considered most dangerous were expelled from the International, while many others were deprived of the right to hold office in their local unions for various terms. Two local unions were dissolved and reorganized so as to eliminate the radicals that had been in control. The radicals, on the other hand, protested that the League was not a dual organization, and denounced the ruling of the General Executive Board as unconstitutional and its methods as terrorism. They averred that they had not been given a fair hearing; they charged that the Board was motivated by partisan hatred, and that its action was dictated by officers who wished to perpetuate themselves in office. They also pointed to the influence exercised in the International by the Socialists, especially by the *Vorwärts*, as an example of outside domination and partisan politics.<sup>10</sup>

Before the convention of 1924 met there had been a long and determined struggle on the part of the League for a foothold in the International. Some of the conservative officials were charged with having taken advantage of their positions to keep the names of the League members who were candidates for delegates to the convention off the ballot. The struggle between the right and left wings occupied a considerable portion of the time of the convention. After a bitter struggle the policy of union officers in suspending and expelling radical members was approved, and sixteen delegates were unseated because of alleged membership in the League.<sup>11</sup> The General Executive Board was given the power of suspending or recalling the charters of local unions.<sup>12</sup> The convention also rejected every important measure proposed by the League.

The program of the League after the convention included

<sup>10</sup> Louis Levine, *The Women's Garment Workers*, 352-358.

<sup>11</sup> Proceedings of the Seventeenth Convention of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, 36-44, 51-54, 65-67, 99-105.

<sup>12</sup> The American Labor Year Book, 1925, p. 87.

adoption of more militant policies, amalgamation of the needle trades, direct negotiation with the employers through shop committees, maintenance of unemployment insurance by the employers alone, reinstatement of members expelled for radical activity, and cessation of the practice of barring Communist candidates from the ballot. The League also advocated representation in proportion to membership on the New York Joint Board, to which regardless of size, each local union was entitled to appoint five delegates. Seven large local unions and six small ones comprised the Board. The struggle for a more equal representation had begun in 1921.<sup>13</sup>

On June 6, 1925, the General Executive Board charged that Local Unions 2, 9, and 22 of New York had refused to collect the \$2.50 assessment levied by the 1924 convention,<sup>14</sup> and had held May Day meetings addressed by enemies of the International, who wished to place the organization under Communist control.<sup>15</sup> Local Union 22 was charged, in addition, with using \$2,000 in bonds for the benefit of a camp hostile to the International.<sup>16</sup> On June 11, 1925, the Joint Board of the cloak and dress makers suspended the managers<sup>17</sup> and executive boards of the accused local unions pending the trial, and requested the International to assume control over the treasuries of the unions. On July 14, 1925, a trial board appointed by the International found the suspended officers guilty as charged, and barred some from office for a year, and some for three years.<sup>18</sup> The officers of the International took over the management of the Joint Board,<sup>19</sup> and set August 11, 1925, as the date for the election of officers for the suspended local unions.

The members of the left wing formed themselves into a Joint Action Committee<sup>20</sup> and established headquarters,

<sup>13</sup> Justice, June 24, 1921, pp. 2, 7.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., June 19, 1925, p. 5.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., Aug. 28, 1925, pp. 1, 2.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., July 17, 1925, p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., June 19, 1925, pp. 1, 2.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., July 17, 1925, p. 1.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., July 31, 1925, pp. 1, 2.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., July 31, 1925, p. 6.

through which they carried on a systematic campaign against the expulsion policy of the International and Joint Board officials.<sup>21</sup> They advised the members of the local unions to cease payments of dues, and thereby repudiate the officials. In the shops controlled by the expelled leaders the union book was not recognized, and workers were required to carry a card issued by the Joint Action Committee. Shop strikes were called when the followers of the expelled leaders were discriminated against. Manufacturers who were then negotiating with the International and Joint Board were warned that any agreement reached in that manner would not be recognized by the committee and its supporters.<sup>22</sup> The committee also engaged in other activities. It brought suit against the International Union Bank to obtain access to the funds of Local Union 22.<sup>23</sup> It staged a mass meeting at the "Yankee" Stadium on July 9, 1925, and set August 18, 1925, as the date for another mass meeting, to be attended by the members of the three local unions and their sympathizers.<sup>24</sup> Both the International officers<sup>25</sup> and the Joint Board<sup>26</sup> ordered all members not to attend, but a crowd variously estimated at from 12,000 to 30,000 was present.

All signs pointed to the organization of a separate union by the Communists and their allies, with the necessary consequences of dual unionism in the needle trades. But the large support accorded the committee by the members of the union brought the administration to terms.<sup>27</sup> The General Executive Board announced a program of reforms, openly acknowledging the defeat of the expulsion policy.<sup>28</sup> The program called for the immediate election of executive boards by all local unions affiliated with the Joint Board,

<sup>21</sup> The Joint Board in the needle trade unions is the body which coordinates the local unions in the same manufacturing center.

<sup>22</sup> David J. Saposs, *Left Wing Unionism*, 181-183.

<sup>23</sup> Justice, July 31, 1925, p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., Aug. 14, 1925, p. 1.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., Aug. 21, 1925, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> Saposs, *Left Wing Unionism*, 181-183.

<sup>28</sup> Justice, Sept. 4, 1925, p. 1.

the election by popular vote of a general manager for the Joint Board, the right of appeal to the General Executive Board of all suspended officers, ineligibility of Communists for office, turning over of local property to the International, and reorganization of Local Unions 2, 9 and 22 within four weeks. Local Unions 21, 45 and 64 (the smaller local unions represented on the Joint Board) were to have the right to vote only on questions concerning themselves; the question of a more equal representation was to be left to the next convention, to be held in December, 1925, or January, 1926, instead of in May, 1926, as originally scheduled; an entirely new staff of paid officers were to be appointed to the Joint Board.<sup>29</sup> On August 30, 1925, the Joint Action Committee rejected this proposal, demanding instead the reinstatement of all expelled officers, the resignation of President Sigman, and the establishment of a more equal representation on the Joint Board.

On September 25, 1925, after a series of conferences between the leaders of the union and the Joint Action Committee, a truce was declared. The administration declared that a "peace without victors and vanquished" had been reached,<sup>30</sup> but in reality the outcome was a decisive victory for the anti-administration forces. The terms included tolerance of political opinions, reference of the question of a more equal representation to the convention, supervision by a committee appointed by the convention over the referendum vote on any decision of the convention, review by the General Executive Board of the convictions by the local executive boards in conformity with the principle of political tolerance, and reinstatement of Joint Board officers of Local Unions 2, 9 and 22.<sup>31</sup> All business and district managers of the above local unions resigned.<sup>32</sup> Vice-Presidents Feinberg and Perlstein had resigned as early as July 27, 1925, in the belief that their continuance in office would aggravate the situation.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., Oct. 2, 1925, p. 2.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., Sept. 25, 1925, pp. 1-2. <sup>32</sup> Ibid., Oct. 9, 1925, p. 3.

The emergency convention to adjust the controversy met in Philadelphia from November 30, 1925, to December 18, 1925. The convention proved to be the longest and one of the stormiest in the history of the American labor movement. The anti-administration forces, though out-voted in the convention, actually represented a majority of the members of the International. The small unions in the International have a relatively larger representation. The administration, therefore, supported by many small local unions, was able to out-vote its opponents, who represented the New York local unions as well as some of the large local unions in other important manufacturing centers.

At the opening of the convention President Green of the American Federation of Labor delivered an eloquent plea for unity in the International. In the course of his address he said:

I am liberal enough to respect the opinion of every man. I think I can be classed as a radical many times, and I have no quarrel with a member of our union who may be classified as a radical. In fact, I am glad to see that spirit manifest itself. I would rather see that alive in every organization than I would to see it dried up with dry rot. I learned a great deal from those who express their progressive views. We need them in our movement. They are the salt of the earth because many times they inspire us to action and to service.<sup>33</sup>

The members of the left wing refused to participate in the work of the convention committees, charging that appointments were unfairly made, and that members of their faction were relegated to unimportant committees. The report of the executive committee gave the administration's version of the New York dispute; the radicals presented a minority report, condemning class collaboration and the expulsion policy, and blaming the administration for the demoralization of the industry. The majority report was adopted by a vote of 140 to 114. Another difference was occasioned by the report of the committee on laws, providing for a modified system of representation in the New York Joint Board, and recom-

<sup>33</sup> Proceedings of the Eighteenth Convention of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, 121.

mending that the convention decide whether the matter should be submitted to the membership. The members of the left wing charged that the report of the committee violated the peace agreement between them and the administration, according to which any decision of the convention on this subject was to be submitted to a referendum. On December 16, the radical group left the convention as a protest against the report.<sup>34</sup> President Sigman then pleaded for strict adherence to the terms of the peace agreement; the convention resolved not to depart from the terms and the radical delegates thereupon returned to the convention.

It was decided to submit the plan for a more equal representation to the membership six months or a year after the adjournment of the convention. According to the plan, local unions with less than 250 members were to have one delegate, those with more than 250 but less than 500 members were to have two delegates, those with a membership between 500 and 1000 were to have three delegates. Local unions with more than 3,000 members were to have an extra delegate for each 1,000 additional members or major fraction thereof; but in no case was a local union to have more than eight delegates. A proposal to retain the present system, according to which each local union has five delegates in cities in which no local union has more than 1,000 members, was opposed by the left wing and rejected by the convention.

A number of other matters received the attention of the convention. Benjamin Gitlow, a Communist, who had been convicted for violation of the New York "criminal anarchy statute"<sup>35</sup> was released by Governor Smith of New York upon petition of the convention,<sup>36</sup> and later addressed it.<sup>37</sup> The recognition of Soviet Russia was demanded. The convention endorsed the principle of liberty for all political prisoners; those in Russia were included, in spite of the

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 311.

<sup>35</sup> *The American Labor Year Book*, 1926, pp. 290-291.

<sup>36</sup> *Proceedings of the Eighteenth Convention of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union*, 231.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 262-264.

opposition of the radical group. A resolution favoring the establishment of a labor party was adopted. The convention decided not to participate in the world trade-union movement. The proposal by the left wing of general election of business agents was rejected. The merger of Local Unions 2, 17, and 35 of New York was approved, as was the peace agreement between the administration and the Joint Action Committee. A motion to discontinue negotiations with Governor Smith's commission was defeated, the majority report declaring that the union "must use every method, mediation, negotiation, and arbitration," with the strike only as a last resort.<sup>38</sup>

The convention extended a general pardon to all expelled members.<sup>39</sup> Those who had been expelled for their connection with the Trade Union Educational League were readmitted to full membership privileges. Those who had been found guilty of "overt acts against the union" were reinstated, but power was reserved to the individual local unions to determine to what extent they should be permitted to participate in union affairs. Morris Sigman was reelected president, receiving 159 votes as against 108 for Louis Hyman, the left wing candidate. Secretary-treasurer Baroff was also reelected, defeating the Communist, Charles Zimmerman, by a vote of 159 to 109. The radicals succeeded, however, in electing four men—Hyman, Portnoy, Boruchovitz, and Gingold—to the General Executive Board. Three of these men had been among those previously expelled, but only one, Boruchovitz, was a member of the Workers' Party.<sup>40</sup>

The Sigman administration looked upon the convention as a vindication in general of its policies, and considered that all important controversial questions had been settled. The left wing, on the other hand, claimed a victory in the clarification of issues and in the consolidation of a left bloc,<sup>41</sup> though not in concrete gains. Soon after the convention

<sup>38</sup> *Justice*, Dec. 11, 1925, p. 1.

<sup>39</sup> *Proceedings of the Eighteenth Convention of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union*, 343.

<sup>40</sup> *Justice*, Dec. 18, 1925, p. 1.

<sup>41</sup> *The American Labor Year Book*, 1926, pp. 139-143.

had adjourned the New York Joint Board began preparations for a strike, which seemed unavoidable upon the expiration of the agreement then in force with the manufacturers. The shop chairman voted in favor of a \$20.00 assessment on each member to increase the strike fund.<sup>42</sup> A proposal of a \$20.00 assessment for a "defense" fund was submitted to a referendum, and approved by a substantial majority.<sup>43</sup> Seven members, representing the seven largest local unions, were appointed to constitute a committee and act as trustees for the assessment fund.<sup>44</sup> Four of these seven trustees were members of the left wing.<sup>45</sup>

While the defense fund was being collected, the Board of Directors of the Joint Board recommended that any four of the seven members be authorized to withdraw money from the fund. This proposal, which gave control over the fund to the radical members of the committee, was accepted by the local unions comprising the Joint Board.<sup>46</sup> The conservative members of the union were unfavorable to this action. The International in its newspaper organ protested,<sup>47</sup> as did Cutters' Local Union 10,<sup>48</sup> which had always supported the Sigman administration. Two of the trustees, Vice-Presidents Ninfo and Antonini, resigned from the committee as a protest against the new ruling.<sup>49</sup> The Joint Board offered the vacant trusteeships to the managers of the smaller locals, but they declined, declaring that no real power would be vested in them.<sup>50</sup> In March, 1926, the New York Joint Board, in order to limit the powers of Secretary-treasurer Fish, who was not a member of the left wing, decided to divide his duties and form two offices, that of recording secretary and that of treasurer.<sup>51</sup> Later the Trade Union Educational

<sup>42</sup> Justice, Jan. 15, 1926, p. 1.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., Feb. 5, 1926, p. 1.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., Feb. 26, 1926, p. 3.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., Mar. 26, 1926, p. 8.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., April 2, 1926, p. 4.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., April 16, 1926, p. 1.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., April 9, 1926, pp. 3, 7.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., April 2, 1926, p. 8.

League made an attempt to secure control of the Italian Local Union 89, but the endeavor did not meet with success.<sup>52</sup>

The advisory commission appointed by Governor Smith, which had helped bring the 1924 strike to a close, and which was making an exhaustive study of the industry, submitted its final report in May, 1926.<sup>53</sup> It pointed out that seventy per cent. of the total product was made by sub-manufacturers, employed by jobbers, and supplied by them with materials and designs; and it advocated "a system of limitation of sub-manufacturers with whom a jobber may do business." The commission praised the large inside shops where work was done under the more desirable union conditions, and advised that these manufacturing establishments be permitted to replace once a year not more than ten per cent. of their employees. The report made no mention of a thirty-six week guarantee of employment or of a forty hour week, both of which had been demanded by the union. The shop chairmen unanimously rejected these recommendations.<sup>54</sup>

From the point of view of the union the commission was neither specific nor drastic enough in its proposals regarding the jobbers, who are regarded as the real employers, and whose methods in pitting contractor against contractor have resulted in the establishment of very small shops, with the consequent difficulty in enforcing union conditions. To remedy this situation the union asked that the number of contractors be limited, and the jobbers guarantee the observance of all union rules by the contractors. The union without difficulty reached agreements with numerous independent employers in all branches of the trade, and with the American Cloak and Suit Sub-Manufacturers Association. Negotiations were carried on with the owners of inside shops who were members of the Industrial Council of Cloak Suit and Shirt Manufacturers, but a deadlock was reached over the clause in the commission's report proposing a ten per cent. reorganization each year and permitting discharge.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., April 23, 1926.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., May 21, 1926, p. 1.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., June 11, 1926, p. 1.

The Industrial Council refused to consider anything except the commission's report, which had been endorsed and accepted by it. The Merchant Ladies' Garment Association, the organization of jobbers, refused to negotiate with the union.<sup>55</sup>

President Sigman declared that in his opinion a strike could not be averted.<sup>56</sup> Before this intimation, Louis Hyman, the manager of the New York Joint Board and the recognized leader of the left wing, remarked that in the event of a strike the International would probably be found creating obstacles in the way of the leaders of the Joint Board.<sup>57</sup> The widespread feeling that a strike was imminent proved well founded. On June 29, 1926, at a meeting attended by 25,000 workers,<sup>58</sup> a motion calling for a general strike in the New York Cloak and Suit industry, effective July 1, was passed unanimously. Preparations for handling the strike were soon completed, and 40,000 workers were registered and assigned to halls.<sup>59</sup> Hyman and Sigman were the candidates for the chairmanship of the strike committee,<sup>60</sup> the former being elected. The members of the various committees, the majority of them Communists or supporters of the Communists, were chosen. These committees received assistance from the International officers.

The strike received the endorsement of the American Federation of Labor<sup>61</sup> whose Executive Council appealed to all International unions<sup>62</sup> for aid for the strikers. At the time the strike began, the New York Joint Board is said to have had about \$350,000 in its treasury. A tax on the earnings of those working in independent shops with which agreements had been reached brought in additional funds.<sup>63</sup> One

<sup>55</sup> The American Labor Year Book, 1927, pp. 107-108.

<sup>56</sup> Justice, June 25, 1926, p. 1.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 1926, p. 4.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., July 2, 1926, p. 1.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., July 9, 1926, p. 1.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., July 16, 1926, p. 2.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., Oct. 15, 1926, p. 4.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., Oct. 22, 1926, p. 1.

<sup>63</sup> The American Labor Year Book, 1927, p. 108.

hundred and sixty-two delegates from ten central bodies and sixty-one local unions, representing a membership of 800,000, answered the call of the Federation and voted to assess each member one dollar per week during the continuance of the strike.<sup>64</sup>

Governor Smith wrote to the union, advising a settlement with the Industrial Council. The union officials replied that not until there had been a settlement with the jobbers could there be a solution of the ills of the industry. Several meetings between strike leaders and representatives of the Industrial Council were held, but they proved unsuccessful, and on September 3 negotiations were discontinued. No conference with the jobbers' association could be arranged. The strikers showed an aggressive spirit, and conducted weekly mass picketing demonstrations. Hundreds of them, both men and women, were arrested. At first they were merely fined, but later they were both fined and given jail sentences of five or ten days. Injunctions were issued against the strikers, which the latter did not obey. As a result the leaders of the strikers were arrested and fined, and some were sent to jail.

On November 13, 1926, an agreement was reached with the Industrial Council affecting those who worked in inside shops, about one-third of the industry. No concessions were obtained from the jobbers. The contract with the Industrial Council gave the manufacturers the right to reorganize their shops annually up to ten per cent. of their employees. The agreement did not provide for any guarantee of employment, and the demand of the designers for recognition was not granted, although union examiners were recognized. A forty-two hour week was established, to be effective until June, 1928; from that date until the expiration of the agreement in June, 1929, a forty hour week was to be in force. The workers secured increases in wages, ranging from three to nine dollars. The agreement also provided for investigation of non-union production, limitation of the number of

<sup>64</sup> Justice, Oct. 15, 1926, p. 2.

contractors, and establishment of a labor employment bureau.<sup>65</sup>

Immediately after the agreement with the Industrial Council was ratified, the conservative element in the New York Joint Board and in the International assailed the Communists for having led the union to what was, in their opinion, a disastrous defeat. On December 1, 1926, the General Executive Board issued a statement charging that the communist leaders had abandoned the chief issues of the strike. The Board asserted that the gains made by the union over and above the recommendations of the Governor's commission consisted only of increases in the minimum wage scale, which were of little benefit because the earnings of the great mass of workers were above the new minimum. The Board further declared that the reduction of working hours from forty-four to forty-two, and eventually to forty, per week was of little consequence, since that concession could have been obtained without resort to a strike. On the other hand, the Board maintained, the Communist leadership had almost ruined the organization. The strike, which lasted twenty weeks, had cost \$3,000,000. The union had renounced its claim to the limitation of sub-manufacturers, which had been granted by the commission. It had been forced to accept a clause giving the right to reorganize three times between January, 1927, and January, 1929, a period of only two years, to employers who paid their workers during the year sums equal to thirty-two weeks' wages. The commission's report had been more favorable, since it had recommended that the right to reorganize once a year be given to employers having a regular force of at least thirty-five employees. "But our International Union and the American Trade Union Movement," the Board declared, "must not and shall not permit Communist blackmail chiefs, or such as serve their nefarious schemes and purposes, to assume positions of leadership in the trade union movement. It is a sacred duty of the labor movement to rid itself of this pestilence."<sup>66</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., Nov. 19, 1926, p. 5.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., Dec. 5, 1926.

The International officials also charged that the management of the strike had been in the hands of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and its New York agents.<sup>67</sup> This assertion appears to be substantially true, for the Central Committee of the Workers Party adopted a resolution relating to the "immediate program for the work of the party,"<sup>68</sup> in which it said: "Our comrades leading the strike failed also to carry out the decisions of the party that a militant struggle be waged against the Sigman machine, which consciously worked for the defeat of the strike. . . . This must be corrected in the future or else the party will be obliged to take stronger measures."

The Communist leaders of the Joint Board, on their part, accused the right wing groups in the needle trades of having sabotaged the strike.<sup>69</sup> They declared that the settlement was a compromise, not a defeat for the union. The contractors, who had previously negotiated an agreement with the union, now demanded the same concessions that had been made to the Industrial Council, and beginning December 9, the members of the Sub-Manufacturers' Association, controlling 800 shops, locked out their employees for three days. The dispute was referred to an arbitration board consisting of Bernard L. Shientag, Herbert H. Lehman, and Lindsay Rogers, all members of the governor's commission. The decision of the board conferred the right to reorganize only on those shops which employed more than thirty-five workers and which had been in business for two years or more; after June, 1928, only those shops having forty employees were to have the right. This decision was accepted on December 20 by the International officials, who had removed the local left wing leaders from their positions at the head of the strikers.<sup>70</sup> Settlement with the third group of employers, the jobbers composing the Merchant Ladies' Garment Association, was reached on January 12, 1927. By the terms of the agreement the Association

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., Nov. 26, 1926, p. 4.

<sup>68</sup> Daily Worker, Nov. 17, 1926.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., Nov. 24, 1926.

<sup>70</sup> Justice, Dec. 17, 1926, p. 1.



promised to give work only to union contractors, and the union on its part abandoned its claim for the limitation of the number of the contractors.<sup>71</sup>

The International officials, after ousting the communists from the leadership of the strike,<sup>72</sup> assumed control, early in December, 1926, of the New York Joint Board and of the local unions comprising it. The latter was accomplished by ordering registration with provisional committees appointed by President Sigman of all members of the New York local unions who wished to retain their membership in the union.<sup>73</sup> The Communists directed their followers not to register with the committees, and called a mass meeting in Madison Square Garden to protest against the expulsion policy of the International officers. To raise money they issued a series of bonds, under the title "Save the Cloakmakers' Union." Their efforts were in the main unsuccessful, and a large majority of the cloakmakers enrolled with the committees. On February 14, 1927, the General Executive Board revoked the charters of Local Unions 2, 9, 22, and 35, and issued new charters to the members who had registered.<sup>74</sup> The Communist Party and the Trade Union Educational League recognized their defeat in the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union by ordering their followers, in February, 1927, to register in the newly-chartered local unions.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>71</sup> The American Labor Year Book, 1927, pp. 108-109.

<sup>72</sup> Justice, Dec. 17, 1926, p. 1.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., Dec. 24, 1926, p. 1.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., Feb. 18, 1927, p. 1.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

## CONCLUSION

In the foregoing chapters the activities of the Trade Union Educational League in a number of representative unions have been traced. Its struggles to gain control of these unions, the method by which it attempted to realize its objectives, and the victories and defeats which fell to its lot have been noted. On the basis of these studies an attempt will be made, first, to describe the tactical policies adopted by the League in the different periods of its activities and, second, to appraise the success attending its efforts.

### I

The policies adopted by the Communists in the process of boring from within were based on certain fundamental principles: (1) the class struggle; (2) the idea of "militant minority"; (3) the demand for amalgamation; and (4) their idea of the strike.

1. Foremost among the Communist doctrines is that of the class struggle. They believe that there is and always has been a bitter struggle between the rich employers and the poverty-stricken workers which increases in intensity as more and more wealth and power are concentrated in the hands of a few. The war of the classes is not spectacular, and not always have the participants been conscious of their parts in it. Nevertheless, it is universal, and it will continue, the Communists think, until society is so reconstructed economically that the causes that give rise to it no longer exist. This is a gigantic task that Labor, armed with knowledge and power, is to perform. In order to accomplish this purpose sooner, the workers must forever be conscious of the irreconcilability of the conflict between the classes and must steadfastly reject any type of class collaboration. Hence, union cooperative management programs, as exemplified by the so-called Baltimore and Ohio plan, are condemned, as we saw in the first chapter.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See above, pp. 10-16.

2. The League believes that the maintenance of a militant minority among the sluggish mass of workers is the best method by which its goals can be attained. The vital activities of the labor movement are carried on, it believes, by an incredibly small number of individuals, and if the Communists can assume the foremost place in all labor battles and demonstrate that their theories, tactics, and forms of organization are best adapted to the labor movement, the mass of workers will willingly submit to their leadership.

3. The Communists look upon the capitalist system of production as merely a passing phase in economic evolution. Inherent in the system based upon the production for profit are contradictions which of necessity must lead to a complete collapse. Out of the ruins of capitalism, the League expects, will rise the Workers' Republic, in which exploitation and misery are replaced by justice and happiness, and in which production for profit is replaced by production for use. This metamorphosis, though inevitable, may be postponed, unless the masses are inculcated with revolutionary ideas, so that the workers may be prepared for their future test of controlling production and society in general. The League seeks to strengthen all labor organizations and to promote all types of labor activities, especially in the industrial field.

However, the Communists believe that great progress cannot be made until the primitive craft unions are consolidated into powerful industrial unions. Industrial unionism, in their opinion, is not a radically new theory, but is simply the logical next step in the evolution of workers' organizations. The Communist leaders believe that unions naturally pass through three distinct stages, which they roughly designate as isolation, federation, and amalgamation. The first organizations of workers are built upon a single craft as a basis. These craft unions are in the beginning isolated and have little or nothing to do with other craft associations. They discover, however, that the employers are able to play them against each other, and so defeat all of them. This discovery of their common interests leads to federation, the

second step in the process. That the process does not stop here, is the opinion of the Communists; for the same forces which lead them to establish loose alliances eventually compel them to consolidate their federations into industrial unions. Amalgamation is, thus, a third and final stage. The industrial unions, on their part, the Communists say, will pass through a similar course of development, and isolation will give way to federation, which in turn will develop into amalgamation. In this evolutionary process America lags far behind England, which, in its National Union of Railwaymen, its Amalgamated Engineering Union, its Miners' Federation, and its Transport and General Workers' Union has already reached the amalgamation stage of development. American unions, the League declares, are still in the federation stage as witnessed by the many alliances, such as the railroad federations, and the printing, metal, building, and other trade councils, that exist in various industries. It is the task of the militant minority to hasten the development into the next stage, and hence the demand for amalgamation, as we have seen in the unions that we have studied, is always one of the foremost in the League program.

4. The most effective weapon that the workers have at their command, the League believes, is the strike, which it regards as perhaps "the greatest proletarian discovery of all times."<sup>2</sup> In order that progress may be made as quickly as possible, this weapon should be used to the greatest advantage. This attitude was well illustrated by the Communist tactics in the New York Joint Boards of the Furriers' Union and of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union.<sup>3</sup>

## II

So much, then for the doctrines and tactics of the Trade Union Educational League. We come now to the consideration of the degree of success which it has attained. It is apparent from the foregoing study that the Workers' Party

<sup>2</sup> Fox, Amalgamation, Pamphlet issued by the Workers' Party, p. 9.  
<sup>3</sup> See above, pp. 80, 101.

and the League have thus far failed in their attempts to gain control over the American labor movement. For this failure there are a number of reasons, some of which have particular reference to the Communist activity, and some of which are inherent in any radical movement in this country.

Perhaps the most important single cause of the lack of success suffered by the Communists is the lack of knowledge on the part of their leaders concerning purely American conditions. It must be remembered that the Workers' (Communist) Party, which directs the Communist attempts to penetrate into the American trade unions, is under control of the Third International, and the allied Red International of Labor Unions. The executive committees of these Internationals are composed largely of Russians, who, unfamiliar with the peculiar conditions to be found in America, and with the psychology of the American worker, attempt to use the same methods that proved successful under the vastly different conditions existing at the time of the revolution.

The methods adopted by the Communists were too extreme to be attended with much success in the American unions. The policy of militant boring from within, which has been discussed in detail, proved unsuccessful, whereas a milder program, one that would make fewer bitter enemies, would probably have achieved greater results. On the other hand, the Communists were handicapped by the presence of an ultra-radical group, which would have severed all connections with the League had a less extreme policy been adopted.

Furthermore, the Communists never realized the necessity of cooperating sincerely with other progressive but less radical groups. They combined with these groups when they were too weak to gain their objectives unaided, but they abandoned their allies when they no longer required any assistance. The other progressive elements submitted to this treatment for a short time, but they soon became angered and refused to have any further dealings with the Communists.

The causes for the Communist failure thus far advanced have been peculiar to the Communist movement. Had dif-

ferent tactics been resorted to, their success might have been somewhat greater. Yet it would be a grave mistake to suppose that milder policies would have insured their success. The American worker, it must not be forgotten, is above all a practical man, and not a theorist or a philosopher. He thinks of the present rather than of the future, and he is concerned primarily with his own welfare. He thinks of himself as an individual, not as a member of a class, and for this reason the misfortunes of his fellow-workers do not greatly interest him. Class consciousness and class solidarity, such as exist in many other countries, are at a minimum here.

Much of this attitude of mind is doubtless due to the fact that the United States is a comparatively young nation, in which the classes have not as yet become as definitely crystallized as in the older European countries. The European working man sees no possibility of rising to a higher stratum of society, and little likelihood that his sons will do so. Consequently he is conscious that his own fortunes will rise or fall as the general condition of the laboring classes is ameliorated or depressed. In this country, on the other hand, the worker sees among the rich and powerful many who rose from such humble surroundings as those in which he finds himself. If he has no hopes for himself, he at least desires that his children shall rise to a higher level. For this reason he lacks the class consciousness that is found among workers in other countries.

Immigrants in general are more radical than the native born. As a rule they emigrated because they were oppressed or because their economic condition was very poor. As one might expect, therefore, most of the radical workers of this country are to be found in the ranks of the foreign-born, and, consequently, it is among them that the League has found most of its supporters. Even these become more and more conservative the longer they stay in this country. Many of the foreign-born workers, wearied of the constant struggle for an invisible goal, are now leaving the League.

One of the most radical of the foreign-born groups is the

Russian-Jewish element. The peculiar psychology of the Russian Jew is due to his life in Russia rather than to his Jewishness, for the German Jew, for example, has a very different psychology. Life under the extremely poor economic conditions in pre-war Russia, together with the oppression to which the Czar subjected them, were calculated to produce great discontent, with its accompanying radicalism, in the Jews of that country. However, the longer they remain in America, where wages are much higher, the more conservative they are apt to become.

Although the Communists utterly failed to gain control over the American labor movement, their efforts were not totally unproductive. They did succeed in stirring some of the conservative labor leaders to increased activity and greater efforts. Any vigorous propaganda, moreover, is bound to secure a number of converts, although the movement may not be attended with the success for which its sympathizers hoped.

As to the future of the Trade Union Educational League, we can only speculate, knowing well the dangers that attend such speculation. If the League persists in the use of the same tactics that have characterized its activities in the past, it seems probable that it will disappear, as its left-wing predecessors have disappeared, or be reduced to a merely nominal existence. On the other hand, it is possible that it will turn its attention to the task of organizing the great mass of unorganized workers in this country. Another possibility is that the Communists' activity, heretofore centered largely in the American Federation of Labor unions, will be transferred to the independent unions, which are, as a rule, more radical. The remaining possibility is that the League will continue its activity in the Federation unions, but adopt a milder program. If it pursues the first mentioned course, and continues its policy of militant boring from within, it is not at all unlikely that it will be replaced by an organization using tactics better adopted to the American labor movement.

## APPENDIX 1

## Papers edited by the Workers' (Communist) Party.

Alba Nuova (Italian weekly).  
 The Daily Worker (Workers' Party daily).  
 Desteptarea (Rumanian weekly).  
 Elore (Hungarian weekly).  
 Empros (Greek weekly).  
 Eritaspard Hayastan (Armenian weekly).  
 Ettenpain (Finnish daily).  
 Freiheit (Jewish daily).  
 Glos Robotniczcy (Polish daily).  
 The Irish People (monthly).  
 Laisve (Lithuanian daily).  
 New Yorker Volkeszeitung (German daily).  
 Novy Mir (Russian weekly).  
 Ny Tid (Scandinavian daily).  
 Pravda (Bohemian weekly).  
 Radnik (South Slavonian weekly).  
 Rovnost Ludo (Slovak weekly).  
 Spravednost (Bohemian daily).  
 Toveri (Finnish daily).  
 Tyomies (Finnish daily).  
 Ukrainian Daily News (Ukrainian daily).  
 Uus Ilm (Esthonian weekly).  
 Vilnis (Lithuanian weekly).  
 The Young Worker (Young Workers' League fortnightly).

## Papers edited by the Trade Union Educational League.

The Workers' Monthly (Trade Union Educational League, monthly).  
 Industrialist (New York Committee for the Amalgamation of the Printing Trade Unions, monthly).  
 Metal Trades Amalgamation Bulletin (International Committee for Amalgamation in the Metal Trades Industry, monthly).  
 Needle Worker (English and Jewish, monthly).  
 Progressive Building Trades Worker (International Committee for Amalgamation in the Building Trades, monthly).  
 The Progressive Miner (Miners' Progressive International Committee, fortnightly).  
 Railroad Amalgamation Advocate (International Committee for Amalgamation in the Railroad Industry, fortnightly).

## APPENDIX 2

The increasing activity of the Communists in American trade unions within the last few years, and the factional strife that has accompanied it, have been viewed with alarm by many conservative labor leaders. This alarm was translated into definite action during the latter part of 1926. On December 9 of that year representatives of a number of trade unions issued a call for a general trade-union conference to be held in New York on December 21, the conference

to consider the formation of a permanent alliance against Communism. Alarmed by this proposal, the Communists arranged mass meetings in New York, Chicago, Baltimore, and Boston. Their opponents, however, attended in such large numbers that the meetings were turned into anti-Communist demonstrations.

The signers of the conference proposal were Abraham Beckerman, manager of the New York Joint Board of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers; Louis D. Berger, manager of the United Neckwear Workers; Samuel A. Beardsley, president of the Jewelry Workers' District Council; Samuel Hershkowitz, manager of the Joint Council of Cap and Millinery Workers; Morris Feinstone, the secretary of the United Hebrew Trades; R. Schneiderman, of the Women's Trade Union League; and Abraham I. Shiplacoff, manager of the International Leather Goods Workers (New Leader, Dec. 11, 1921). On December 21, the Committee for the Preservation of the Trade Unions was formed, the conference, as reported by the Socialist papers, being composed of more than 400 delegates, representing 300,000 workers in 17 trades. Because of the presence of Chicago, Boston, and Philadelphia delegates the organization was made a national one instead of being limited to New York City, as had been planned. The Committee adopted a program which declares that the Communist leaders seek to "make the trade unions conscripts of the oligarchy known as the Communist Party." "For years," the program continues, "we had supposed that members of this group could be reasoned with. We have presented reasons and facts, argument and persuasion, but to no purpose. All these methods by which civilized people adjust their differences of opinion have been spurned. We have been answered by malicious slander, atrocious falsehoods, unjustified attacks, and secret plotting. . . . We submit that tolerance of these crimes would itself be a crime against the trade unions. We have endured this insolence long enough. We have resolved to end it. . . . We call for the workers in all unions to unite against the internal enemy, the communist. The division between the trade union movement and the communist adventures must be definitely established."

The formation of the Committee, according to its organizers, does not at all mean that the Communists were gaining in power at that time. "The fact is that the communist interlopers in the trade unions were never so weak as they are now," declared Abraham Beckerman, one of the promoters of the conference. "Except in the Furriers' and Cloakmakers' Unions, locally, they are without power or prestige. In all other unions we have succeeded in isolating them and stamping them out. In the Furriers' and Cloakmakers' Unions the communists have proved their own undoing, though the workers in the industries, not the communist leaders, have been the sufferers. The communists are on the run. Within a short time all that will be left of them will be a bad memory. It is to facilitate their demise, to minimize the amount of danger they can add to their long record of wreckage that our committee has organized and called a general trade union conference."

The program adopted by the committee for the Preservation of the Trade Unions includes the following activities: 1. The holding of public meetings for the purpose of educating members of the unions and the workers in general regarding American communist activities

in the unions; 2. The printing and distribution of literature based upon a careful survey of facts and sources regarding the American communist movement, its methods, its intrigues, and the results of its attempts at dictatorship in the unions; 3. The raising of a fund for the aid of trade unions that may be menaced by communist organization, and the furnishing to them, if necessary, of literature and speakers; 4. The holding of frequent conferences for the consideration of reports made by representatives of affiliated organizations, and the taking of such action as may be required as a result of the information received; 5. The making of a survey of the "Innocents' Clubs" and camouflaged organizations formed by communists or the Communist Party, through which they have received funds, ostensibly for the protection of the foreign born, the Negroes, or the Filipinos, for the release of political prisoners, for the protection of civil rights, etc., but all of which funds are intended to further the destructive work of American communism; 6. The maintenance of publicity service to enlighten the people of this country, and trade unionists in particular, regarding the absurd and ridiculous ideas which a few fanatics are trying to impose, through a policy of terrorism, upon the labor movement of the United States; 7. The expulsion from places of power and influence of any members who take orders from the Communist Party or who have any friendly relations with the Trade Union Educational League, its officials, or members.<sup>1</sup> The Committee has decided to restrict its function to the prevention of communist interference in the unions. It has no interest in the purely political activities of the communists.<sup>2</sup>

The present administration of the American Federation of Labor is heartily in sympathy with the efforts of the Committee, and its attitude is reflected in an editorial in its official publication. The writer, President Green, insists upon the uncompromising antagonism between trade unionism and communism, asserting that the communists "are unalterably committed to plans to destroy trade unions." They do not promote union activities, the editorial declares, but stir up discontent so that they can use the union to serve their own purposes. "If communists are permitted to remain in a union, then time and resources must be wasted in preventing their double-crossing the union and undermining its activities. There is only one way to handle a communist found in a union: make public his affiliation and expell him. . . . If you furnish them a foothold, the communists will betray your tolerance by blocking or defeating your effort. The only way to deal with communism is to eradicate it root and branch."

<sup>1</sup> The New Leader, Dec. 25, 1926.

<sup>2</sup> American Appeal, Jan. 1, 1927.

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