

WILLIAM Z. FOSTER

A  
MANUAL  
OF  
INDUSTRIAL  
UNIONISM



*Organizational  
Structure and Policies*



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A MANUAL OF INDUSTRIAL UNIONISM

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## A STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

**A**FTER FORTY years of intensive educational work by the progressive and revolutionary elements in the trade union movement on the necessity for industrial unionism to organize the workers in the mass production industries of the country, at last it is being applied on a general scale by the Committee for Industrial Organization, headed by John L. Lewis. The effectiveness of this type of unionism is being borne out in practice by the unparalleled growth of the C.I.O. unions in steel, auto, rubber, oil, radio, ship-building, textile, transport and other industries. Real strides are finally being made toward the organization of the great mass of workers in the basic industries.

The growth of these industrial unions naturally is accompanied by a whole series of new problems, not only with regard to unionizing tactics and strike strategy, but also concerning organizational forms and the methods of conducting the unions' activities generally. In the past there have been a few American trade unions formed on an industrial basis, notably the United Mine Workers of America, United Textile Workers, Paper Workers, Brewery Workers, and (at least on paper) Butcher Workmen, Metal Miners, and Iron, Steel and Tin Workers, as well as the four semi-industrial needle trades unions. But the new C.I.O. unions are coming into existence under conditions that raise many problems not previously solved by these forerunners of present-day industrial unionism. It is the purpose of this

pamphlet to answer the most urgent of these questions, on the basis of broad experience by many unions in the United States and other countries.

In considering the organizing problems of the new industrial unions, it is necessary always to bear in mind the decisive fact that labor unions are organs of struggle. Unions sign trade agreements with the bosses and carry them out loyally; but behind these agreements a relationship of power always exists. Thus, labor unions are able to secure concessions from the employers in direct ratio to their strength. Hence, all organization forms and practices in the industrial unions must be developed with regard to increasing the fighting power of these bodies.

The basic improvement of the C.I.O. industrial unions over the A. F. of L. craft organizations is that they are more effective organs of struggle against capitalist exploitation. First, instead of splitting the workers of an industry, as the A. F. of L. does, into from ten to twenty-five separate craft unions, all of which are autonomous, pulling this way and that and, consequently, quite incapable of bringing a solid pressure to bear against the employers—the C.I.O. unites all the workers of a given industry into one broad industrial union, thereby enormously increasing the workers' strength. Second, instead of being dominated by arbitrary bureaucracies, such as rule practically every A. F. of L. craft union and thereby paralyze the effectiveness of those organizations, the new industrial unions of the C.I.O. despite some undemocratic hangovers from the past, are developing a new trade union democracy—a real improvement which greatly increases their potentialities in the struggle against the employers.

Behind the basic organizational differences between the A. F. of L. and C.I.O. unions stand two fundamentally



divergent conceptions of unionism. On the one hand, the A. F. of L. craft unionism characteristically does not consider or organize the workers as a class or recognize the existence of the class struggle. Instead, it caters principally to the more skilled elements and it does not hesitate to sacrifice the welfare of the broad masses of the semi-skilled and unskilled in order to further the interests of the skilled workers. Upon this general outlook is based the whole policy of the A. F. of L.: its wheedling attitude toward the employers, its subservient policy of class collaboration, its failure to organize the unorganized, its craft scabbery during strikes, its tailing after the capitalist political parties and begging them for minor concessions, etc. The general results of such a narrow craft policy we see in the A. F. of L.'s repeated loss of strikes, its inability to organize the mass production industries, the insignificant percentage of workers (even of the skilled) that it has organized, and the weak position politically of the workers in American life.

On the other hand, the C.I.O. organizes the workers primarily as a class. Although the C.I.O. leadership does not accept the class struggle in theory, the C.I.O.'s very birth, its broad unions and its strong organizing campaigns and strikes testify eloquently enough to the reality of the class struggle. The basis of the C.I.O.'s industrial unionism is a militant defense of the interests not only of the privileged few skilled workers, but of the great masses of unskilled and semi-skilled as well. With this broader conception and policy of unionism, therefore, it is not to be wondered at that the rise of the C.I.O. unions has been marked by the winning of many strikes against the great trusts, a tremendous strengthening of the trade union movement in the mass production industries and the beginning of a broad

political movement of the toilers that is heading in the direction of a Farmer-Labor Party. The A. F. of L. stands for craft unionism, the C.I.O. for class unionism. The growth of the C.I.O. implies the consolidation of the American proletariat for the first time as a class.

It is a well-known fact that the political content of an organization's program expresses itself also in the whole structure and organizational practices of that body. In accordance with this principle, the A. F. of L., during its half-century of existence, has built up a whole series of organizational forms and methods corresponding to and flowing out of its basic policy of craft unionism. It is fundamentally necessary that the new C.I.O. industrial unions also adapt all their organic structures and methods of conducting business to fit in with their class conception of unionism.

In building the new unions there is a serious danger that there may be carried over into them the useless and reactionary organizational forms and practices of the A. F. of L. craft unions, whose customs and methods are long established and deeply ingrained in trade union tradition generally. To prevent this harmful carry-over of outworn craft systems and to give the new industrial unions structures and methods of work corresponding to the new concepts and tasks of these unions must be a central consideration in all our union building.

In the ensuing pages will be pointed out the fundamental organizational structure and practices around which the new industrial unions should be built, and there will also be indicated the weak and unfit A. F. of L. corresponding forms which must be avoided. In doing this our task is not to make a model constitution for the C.I.O. industrial unions. The conditions which these unions confront are too varied

for any such schematic approach to their organizational problems. Our job here is rather to discuss the general principles of industrial unionism, principles which should be applied with the greatest flexibility and with due regard to all the special conditions which may obtain in each specific union situation.

## PART ONE

# ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF INDUSTRIAL UNIONISM

### I. THE LOCAL INDUSTRIAL UNION

THE BASIC principle of industrial unionism is "one-plant-one-union." This means that all workers in a given shop or plant must be organized into one local union, so that they may stand unitedly against their employer. Such a form of unionism provides the strongest basis of solidarity, as well as the most effective system of handling the workers' grievances. But this principle of organization has to be applied to fit the various conditions that the new unions face. Let us take up some specific problems in its application.

First, there is the question of small shops, where the body of workers is not large enough to maintain a separate local union of their own. In such cases two or more shops should be joined together into one local union, which is a "general" or "mixed" local. But here the tendency must be avoided of piling together a large number of shops into huge local unions. With such big, oversized locals the grievances of the workers and the business of the union generally cannot be properly taken care of. In the auto and some other industries, where new unions are being built, this mistake has been made in some instances and general locals have been set up, covering many shops and including as many as 30,000 members. This is very impractical. Such general

locals should not exceed 2,000 to 3,000 members. The building of enormous top-heavy locals smacks somewhat of the old A. F. of L. craft system of building up big locals from shops indiscriminately all over a city, or there may be a dash of the One Big Union tendency in it. In any event, this wrong practice should be avoided.

Especially there should not be shops of different branches of one industry heaped together in single locals; such, for example, as rayon, silk, wool, cotton, etc., workers in the textile industry. Such a mixing up of widely different industrial branches creates confusion. It has already been done in a number of cases in C.I.O. unions, however, and it should be corrected.

Then there is the problem of applying the one-plant-one-union principle to the very large plants that are often found in auto, steel and other mass production industries. Here it is necessary to adopt a somewhat modified form of local industrial union. For it is obvious that it is impossible to hold general membership meetings of single plants that contain as many as 30,000 workers, or, as in the case of the Ford plant, a potential membership of no less than 90,000.

With these big industrial units the problem of the too-large local union is solved by developing a system of departmentalization of the plant local union. Even in medium-sized plants a certain degree of departmentalization is necessary, in the sense that departmental meetings should be held for the election of shop stewards, the consideration of various shop problems, etc. In very large plants, however, this system of departmentalization should be extended to the point of consolidating the department organizations into sub-local unions with their own executive committees and officials. But in all such cases these departmental sub-locals should be subordinated to the local union which covers

the plant as a whole. In large plants, which have a number of sub-locals, the plant local union should take the form of a council made up of representatives of the various departmental sub-locals. Thus, the basic principle of one-plant-one-union prevails, with the plant local supervising and unifying all the activities of its sub-locals. Of course, this system of organization must be applied with due regard to local conditions.

In industries where the unit of local organization is the farm, the ship, the lumber camp, the construction job, etc., or elsewhere, where for various reasons it is not possible to build up a permanent or stable local union directly on the job, it will often be found necessary to develop general local unions in individual centers which then serve as rallying points for the various groups of workers, all of which have their own respective farm, ship, camp, building or other committee where they work.

#### **(a) Shop Stewards**

It is vital to the success of industrial unions that the system of shop stewards be fully developed. Shop stewards are the cutting edge of the local union; indeed, the foundation of the whole union in the industry. They are the beginnings of unity among the workers and the starting points of collective bargaining in the industries. The stewards handle grievances, collect dues, organize union meetings and perform many other functions in the enforcement of the union agreement and the building of the union. The power of a given industrial union can be pretty much measured by the degree of organization possessed by its system of shop stewards.

There should be one head steward for each building, department and shop, with an additional number of deputy

stewards, sufficient to carry on the work of the stewards generally. The stewards should be democratically elected in their respective shops and departments. Periodical meetings should be held of the stewards in the given shops, departments, and the plant as a whole.

### **(b) The Plant Committee**

The head of the local union in a given plant is the plant committee, sometimes called the shop stewards' council. The plant committee should be a broad delegate body made up of the stewards from the various departments and shops and also of rank-and-file workers. The ratio of representation to the plant committee depends on the size of the plant and may range from one delegate to each 25 workers to one for each 200 or more. These delegates should be elected by the workers in the respective shops and departments. The plant committee should meet regularly and supervise all the union business in the plant. It should have a small executive, sometimes called the bargaining committee, to deal with the employers. When necessary to settle important questions with the company, the bargaining committee should call to its assistance general representatives of the national union or district council of the union.

In local unions that contain the workers of only one plant, the plant committee, with its president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer and executive, is actually the head of the local union and transacts all its business. In local unions that are made up of the workers of several plants, however, the various plant committees are subordinate committees of the local union, which in such cases should have an executive committee of its own.

This whole set-up of all the workers in one plant being in one local union, which has a well developed system of shop

stewards to conduct its shop activities and a plant committee to head it, is incomparably superior to the old A. F. of L. craft system of splitting the workers into many unions without direct contact with each other in a given shop, its sketchy system of grievance committees and its almost total lack of shop committees of any description. The new system makes for a solid, effective organization; the old system for division and weakness. The more the industrial unions perfect in practice their characteristic principle of one-plant-one-union, with its modern shop steward and plant committee system, the stronger these unions will be and the greater advance they will represent over the primitive and obsolete A. F. of L. type of unionism.

## II. THE LOCAL INDUSTRIAL COUNCIL

The various local unions of an industrial union in a given city or local community have many problems which they must deal with in common and, therefore, they should be united together in a local industrial council of their own industry. Thus, the many local unions in the big Chicago stockyards should be formed into one packing house workers' council. For the same general reasons, the numerous unions in the steel mills in Pittsburgh should be combined into one inclusive steel workers' council and, likewise, the various unions of the auto plants of Detroit should be formed into one auto workers' council; and so on in all communities where there are several local unions in any one given industry.

Such local industrial councils, which may be named variously in different unions, should consist of a broad representation from the local unions that form their base and they should avoid the system of being merely narrow committees of business agents and other bureaucratic officials that



characterize the corresponding local craft union councils (of carpenters, machinists, etc), of the A. F. of L. The new local industrial councils should hold periodic broad conferences of rank-and-file representatives of their constituent local unions; they should be active organizing agents in their industry locally and should generally stimulate the growth and functioning of the constituent local unions.

### III. THE DISTRICT INDUSTRIAL COUNCIL

The local industrial unions and local industrial councils of a given national industrial union should also form councils of a district or regional character, in order to deal with the many problems that arise in these larger areas—problems of organization, support of strikes, and many other matters. The district industrial councils (named as they may be in the several unions) should be based on natural industrial divisions such as, for example, a broad mine field, a big steel district containing many mill towns, an extensive textile area, a railroad system, etc.; or they may correspond to political divisions, as, for example, a state building trades council, etc. As in the case of the local industrial councils, these district or regional industrial councils should be built on a rank-and-file representation, instead of upon the narrow A. F. of L. system of little cliques of officials for corresponding types of organization. They should also hold broad periodic conferences of rank-and-file delegates.

### IV. THE NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL UNION

#### (a) What Is an Industry?

The national (and international where Canada is included) industrial unions are based on the principle of "one-industry-one-union." But this principle, like that of one-plant-

one-union, must also be applied flexibly and adapted to the conditions of the various industries and categories of workers. There should be no schematic approach to the problem, no elaboration of One Big Union charts as fixed plans of organization. The problem is far too complicated for that.

There are, roughly, two general types of national industrial organizations. These are the national industrial union, which is a solid organization of all the workers in one industry into one union; and the national industrial federation, which is a loose grouping together of craft or semi-industrial unions along industrial lines. Let us consider first in some detail the national industrial union type of organization.

The U. M. W. of A., containing all the workers of the coal mining industry in one solid national organization, is a good type of national industrial union. Similar organizations are in the process of construction in steel, auto, meat-packing, textile and many other industries. Industrial unions should each be based on one industry; but in building them, in order to establish their membership scope, we at once confront the question of what constitutes an industry. Obviously, the industries are not sharp, clear-cut entities, definitely marked off from each other. On the contrary, as parts of one complicated general industrial fabric, they interlace and merge with one another. What, then, is the guiding principle for establishing the membership limits of industrial unions?

The most practical answer to this question is found by bearing in mind the fact, as we have stated before, that industrial unions are organs of struggle and must, therefore, organize themselves so as to make the strongest front against the employers in their respective industries. Consequently, the best guide as to just what territory of a given

industry an industrial union should cover is that furnished by the extent of the trusts and employers' associations in that industry. The employers' organizations not only mark out better than any other institution the technical boundaries of the industries but, what is decisive, they constitute the forces that the unions must organize against.

This principle of establishing the lines of the industrial unions according to those of the employers' organizations is generally sound, but there are many exceptions to it. Thus, in some cases, the industrial unions do not spread quite as far as the employers' organization (thus the steel union does not include the "captive" coal miners of the steel companies), and in other instances, the membership scope of the industrial unions runs beyond the limits achieved by the employers' organizations in the given industry proper (thus the radio workers' union takes in many kinds of light metal workers although the employers' associations in the electrical manufacturing industry do not include them).

The theory that the industrial unions should organize from the raw materials to the finished products is applicable only to certain industries. It is correct, say, in the meat-packing and wood-working industries. But it is not correct in the auto industry, which generally does not work with raw materials, nor in the steel industry proper, which does not finish all metal products. Besides, there are other "industries" which produce neither raw materials nor finished commodities, but services; such as transportation, communication, etc. All of which brings us back to the practical basis of organizing industrial unions on the principle of exerting pressure against the organizations of employers in their respective industries. The main thing is that the unions be organized so as to be able to bring to a standstill their given industry.

## (b) Jurisdictional Problems

With this general guide in mind, the task of establishing the lines of demarcation between various industrial unions, although possessing many complications, is not too difficult for practical solution. It is certainly far less complex than to establish the jurisdiction of A. F. of L. craft unions. Among the A. F. of L. unions there have always raged bitter jurisdictional quarrels. These have led to unnecessary strikes, splits in the labor movement and even to bloody encounters between unions (the pre-war struggle in the Chicago "pipe trades" union cost nineteen lives). The reason for the frequency, intensity, tenacity and bitterness of the A. F. of L. jurisdictional quarrels is that the various craft unions are trying to maintain an impossible position of craft inviolability in industries where craft lines are being rapidly destroyed by specialization and rationalization, and the fight to keep the crafts intact is really a fight to preserve their life.

But in the system of broad industrial unions the whole matter is quite different. While undoubtedly some questions of jurisdictional dispute will develop they will necessarily be minor questions, dealing only with the outer fringes of the respective unions and by means raising the issue of their life or death. There are fewer unions, less points of friction between them and a smaller percentage of their members involved. Besides, the industrial unions are animated with a much higher spirit of class solidarity and unity, and questions of jurisdiction are more readily adjusted. All this is borne out by the experience of the industrial unions in many countries.

The foundation of every industrial union is plainly the workers of the most elementary processes in that industry. Thus in auto it is the masses of skilled, semi-skilled and

unskilled in the big assembly and "parts" plants; in steel it is the workers in the great blast furnaces and rolling mills; in meat-packing it is the workers in the extensive stockyards and slaughterhouses; in oil it is the workers in the oil fields and refineries; in wood, the masses of workers in the logging camps and sawmills, etc. Besides such basic workers, however, in each case the union must include other groups of workers, closer to the boundaries of the respective industries. These are to be organized according to certain principles of industrial unionism, most of which have already been established in the practice of the existing industrial unions in this country. Let us, therefore, discuss some of these edge-of-the-industry problems and the principles of industrial unionism that apply to them.

*Processing and Finishing Workers.* These are workers who carry the basic industrial process on to the finished or semi-finished product stage. As a rule, if these workers are directly connected up with the basic sections of the industry they should be covered by the industrial union of that industry. Thus, the meat-packing union should include not only workers in the stockyards and slaughterhouses, but also those employed in the meat canneries of the packing plants. The United Mine Workers of America thus properly includes in its ranks not only coal miners, but workers around coke ovens. By the same principle, the agricultural union should include the workers in the fruit and vegetable packing plants, the cotton gin workers, sugar beet plant workers dairy workers and other workers directly connected up with its industry. It is, therefore, in accord with correct industrial union principles that the metal miners' union covers workers in the non-ferrous metal stamping mills and smelters, which are mostly owned by the mining companies and located in the same areas as the mines; and it is also correct that

the metal miners' union, although it organizes the iron miners, does not organize the iron ore smelter men, who work far from the iron mines in the blast furnaces, which are parts of the plants of the great steel mills; these workers properly belong to the steel union. This general principle of industrial unionism, to include the processing workers in the union of the basic industry, of course, has to be applied with due consideration of established industrial union procedure in a given situation.

*"Parts" Workers.* These workers are employed in the plants that furnish special materials or parts to basic industries. The rule in this case is that if a plant devotes itself entirely to making parts for a given industry its workers should belong to the union of that industry. But if the plant makes the parts as a section of its general output of, let us say, various metal commodities, then it belongs to the union of the metal industry. Thus all the numerous plants that devote themselves entirely to producing parts for the auto industry, such as instruments, cushions, lamps, etc., etc., fall under the jurisdiction of the auto union; but the workers in rubber factories which make not only automobile tires but also many non-auto rubber goods fall within the sphere of the rubber industrial union. By the same rule the workers in the car-building, barrel-making, box-making and other plants directly connected with the meat-packing industry belong to the packing house workers' union, and so on in various other industries.

*By-Products Workers.* Many industries are surrounded by various by-products plants. Typical are the large number of fertilizer works, butterine factories, glue works, soap works, etc., that cluster about the great meat-packing industry and derive their materials from its processes. As a rule, such by-products workers should belong to the union

of the industry which forms their economic basis. Here again flexibility must be used; because, for example, the growth of an eventual chemical industrial union might draw in all fertilizer workers, and a big food union might take in the butterine workers.

*Transport Workers.* The general rule for these workers (truck drivers, railroad workers, marine workers, etc.), who are directly employed by a given industry, is that they should belong to the union of that industry. But those who are employed in general transport—by general trucking firms, railroad companies, steamship concerns—should belong to their respective transport unions. Craft traditions and organizations already existing among these workers, however, have to be taken into consideration in applying this generally correct principle. Thus, for example, the meat-packing house truck drivers in Chicago have always belonged to the teamsters' union, the steel trust Great Lakes ore-boatmen traditionally affiliate with the seamen, etc.

*Office Workers.* Properly, the office workers in an industry belong to the union of that industry, and this is actually the case with the office workers in coal mining. But inasmuch as many industrial unions do not take in office workers, the workers in such cases should be organized into a general union of office employees.

*Distributive Workers.* In general, the workers who finally sell, wholesale and retail, the products of an industry should not belong to the industrial union of that industry, but to a distributive workers' union. Thus, the shoe workers' industrial union does not organize the retail shoe salesmen, but leaves these to a sales clerks' union. But practice and tradition count here also. In some cases the industrial or semi-industrial unions also organize the retail forces of their industry. This is notably the case with the butcher work-

men, the long-established A. F. of L. near-industrial union in the packing industry, which takes in meat-cutters and salesmen in local butcher shops. The oil workers are also organizing filling station employees and the auto union in some places is taking in members of the sales force of that industry.

*Building Workers.* Building trades workers who are permanently engaged in maintenance and construction work in a given industry (example, bricklayers in steel plants) should belong to the union of that industry. But building workers who are engaged in an industry for special construction work on a contract basis should be members of the building trades workers' union.

*Miscellaneous.* Workers in services auxiliary to a given industry, such as plant cafeterias, sport activities, plant papers, etc., properly belong to the basic industrial union of the industry.

### (c) Departmentalization

In forming national industrial unions care should be exercised not to heap the various trades together indiscriminately. Not amorphous mass organizations, but clear-cut, well-organized unions are what is necessary. Shapeless mass organization prevents proper handling of the union's business and also does not develop the organized strength of the workers. Some of the new C.I.O. unions, not unnaturally in view of their rapid growth, have made this mistake of rather indiscriminate organization. They should be properly reorganized as soon as possible.

Regular forms of organization are necessary so that the industrial union may thoroughly represent all crafts and categories among its membership. Especially the interests of the skilled and unskilled must be dovetailed by correct



organization and proper methods of work. The craft unionists' contention that skilled workers must have unions of their own in order to be properly represented is flatly contradicted by labor experience in many countries where industrial unions exist. And here in the United States the experience of the U.M.W.A. abundantly proves that the interests of both the skilled and unskilled (as well as that of Negroes and whites, Americans and foreign-born) can be advanced better by industrial unions than by any other possible form of labor organization.

Broad mass industrial unions should be departmentalized. This departmentalization is of two general forms, functional and industrial. Functional departmentalization regularizes the union's elementary activities. Thus, the union should have well-developed departments, nationally and locally, for at least the following major tasks: (*a*) finance, to thoroughly organize all the monetary affairs of the union; (*b*) research and education, to check up on all phases of industrial and political life and to organize educational work among the membership and unorganized masses; (*c*) organization, to systematize the union's structure and membership recruiting campaigns; (*d*) athletics, to serve as the basis for the organization of the youth in the industry; (*e*) women's auxiliaries, to unite the womenfolk of the union membership in support of its activities; (*f*) insurance benefits, where these are a feature of the union. In most A. F. of L. unions, such functional departments are either non-existent or very fragmentary. Every industrial union should make this type of correct departmentalization an object of its serious attention.

The second, or industrial, form of departmentalization necessary to the proper conduct of the business of the industrial unions runs along the lines of special industrial

branches. Thus, in unions covering several sub-industries it is necessary to make a degree of departmentalization to handle the affairs of each. But this departmentalization must go along the lines of industries, not crafts.

Take textile, for example. The industrial union in this industry covers several industrial branches—wool, cotton, rayon, silk, dye, hosiery, carpets, etc.—in each of which production is carried on mostly in separate plants under separate employers. This condition requires negotiations by the union with different groups of employers and often separate strikes by the workers in these various industrial branches. Obviously here departmentalization is necessary. The United Textile Workers, an industrial union, in its A. F. of L. days attempted to solve this problem by making of itself a loose grouping of almost completely autonomous industrial sections corresponding to the several branches of the industry. It was hardly more than a federation of textile crafts, a system which enfeebled the organization as a whole.

The new C.I.O. textile union (and other unions that confront similar problems) should have a much greater centralization in its departmentalization. Separate conferences of members, separate negotiations with the employers and separate strikes will continue to be necessary in silk, cotton, wool and the other industrial branches; but the various departments devoting themselves to these industrial branches must not acquire the status of unions within the union or assume hard and fast organizational form. There must be only one national executive, one treasury, one set of organizers and one union policy. The work of each industrial department must be at all times subordinated to and directed by the national executive board of the union.

In nearly all broad industrial unions a need for departmentalization will be found to exist in some degree or other.

The special conditions in each situation should determine its particular forms. The solution must provide the proper organizational means to represent adequately the demands of the workers in the various industrial groups, while at the same time it keeps behind these workers the full power and control of the organization as a whole. There must not be developed departmental autonomy, and especially not craft autonomy, within a given industrial union.

#### **(d) Official Leadership**

The leadership of a national industrial union should be thoroughly representative of the various sections, industrial and geographical, in the industry. The best trade union practice would suggest the following national set-up of officers: president, vice-president, secretary-treasurer and a national executive board made up of members from the several districts of the union, plus a corps of national organizers sufficiently large to carry on the union's field work.

In this whole matter of national officers, however, the traditions of the given union or industry must be taken into account. Thus, in many unions, instead of one vice-president, there are several who act in the capacity of general organizers and negotiators. But in the writer's opinion, the set-up proposed above is the best, as it tends to lend more importance to the proper leading body, the national executive board.

#### **V. THE NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL FEDERATION**

So much for the organization of the national industrial union. Now let us give attention to the second specific type of national organization in a given industry: the national industrial federation. National industrial federations are of two general kinds: those that cover one industry and those that include several related industries.

### (a) Single-Industry Federations

Industrial unionism is applicable not only to the mass production industries, but to all industries. The need for solidarity and united action that compels the workers in steel, auto, rubber, meat-packing and other mass production industries to form industrial unions also exists, in greater or lesser measure, in every other industry in the country. This need for industrial unionism is amply proved by the many lost strikes, difficulties in organization work, etc., that the workers in these industries have experienced.

But in many industries the path to industrial unionism is not by the direct route of building the industrial unions outright from the ground up, as in steel, auto, etc. This is because in the industries in question there are many craft unions already in existence, and the leaders of these unions, influenced by the thought of their well-paid official positions, are, as a rule, strongly opposed to the perspective of having only one union in each industry. Moreover, the workers in such industries, through long years of experience with the craft unions, have developed many craft moods and notions that have to be considered. Industries of this type are building, marine, railroad, printing, theatres, etc. The situation in these industries is further complicated by the fact that some of the existing craft unions belong to the C.I.O., while others are affiliated to the A. F. of L., and between the two groups much hostility exists.

It is in these industries, where the craft unions have built up considerable organization and a deep-seated tradition, that the national industrial federation plays an effective part in the industrial union movement. By linking up the various craft unions of a given industry into a national federation, the barriers between these unions are broken

down and they begin to advance toward industrial solidarity and a common organization. Their route to industrial unionism is from isolated action, through federation, to amalgamation. Whether the unions in question are affiliated to the C.I.O. or to the A. F. of L., or to both, the progressive elements within them should fight to develop them along this general line of federation and amalgamation.

Let us now consider some practical examples: On the railroads, the workers have a powerful need for industrial unionism. They have to face the most gigantic and best organized combination of capital in the United States, and many lost strikes show plainly that the present set-up of twenty-one separate craft unions cannot do the job effectively. What is needed is a great, solid industrial union of the 1,200,000 railroad workers. And the first step to achieve this end is by linking all these fragmentary railroad unions into a national industrial federation. This federation, fighting for one national railroad agreement, should then, step by step, be amalgamated into one solid, departmentalized, industrial union, by gradually consolidating their executives, treasuries, organizing staffs, headquarters, journals, conventions, etc. To hasten this general process of amalgamation the more closely related unions (trainmen and conductors, for example) should be completely consolidated at the earliest possible date.

In the marine industry, likewise, if all the longshoremen, sailors, etc., were combined in one industrial union their organized power would be far greater than it is with the traditional system of craft unionism. Here again, the craft unions should be federated nationally as the first stage of this eventual consolidation. The Pacific Coast Maritime Federation blazed the trail in this direction and the C.I.O. is

traveling the right road by organizing the new National Maritime Council.

The needle trades unions, affiliated to the C.I.O., are semi-industrial in character, each covering an important branch (women's garments, men's clothes, fur, hats) of the broad clothing industry. They would be much stronger if they were all combined into one industrial union of clothing workers, and they would do well to advance toward this goal by first setting up a needle trades federation and then proceeding gradually to amalgamate the component unions into one solid organization.

The building trades are another group of industries where the development of industrial unionism through federation would be most helpful in increasing their effectiveness. And the same can be said of printing, theatres, etc.

It was with the national industrial federation type of unionism that the meat-packing and steel industries were organized in 1917-19. But this was the work of the progressives; the A. F. of L. leadership being opposed to such federation, it eventually broke them up. On the railroads also, about 1911-15, the progressives caused the development of widespread and strong system and division federations, but the reactionaries have emasculated these.

In years past the A. F. of L., however, despite its fetish of craft unionism, was compelled to recognize in some measure the need for solidarity of the various craft unions in given industries. This explains why it set up its departments in the building, metal and railroad industries. But these departments were conceived in the left-hand sense of being substitutes for real industrial unionism, not steps toward it. All three of these departments, which are very loose forms of federation, were organized to head off the big pre-war-time agitation among the rank and file for industrial union-

ism. And it is characteristic that it is precisely now, when there is a strong C.I.O. movement among the marine unions, that President Ryan of the longshoremen tries to checkmate it by proposing a weak form of national federation among them.

The A. F. of L. industrial departments have not limited the overdeveloped autonomy of the craft unions and brought about the much-needed solidarity of action among these organizations, nor have the printing trades councils, a similar type, done so. These organizations have served all too often as convenient battlegrounds for stupid jurisdictional quarrels among the perpetually squabbling craft unions. The industrial federations that the C.I.O. and progressives in the A. F. of L. should strive for in industries where craft unionism has a grip must be far more compact organizations; bodies that will bring about a practical solidarity now between the existing unions, and which will open the road to their eventual merging into an industrial union.

### **(b) Broad-Industry Federations**

Now let us give brief consideration to that wider, second, type of national industrial federation which links up together several national industrial unions into a strong alliance. Such great industrial federations have been developed in other countries, notably the Transport Workers Federation of Great Britain and, in pre-Hitler days, the big federations of metal workers, office employees, etc., in Germany.

In the United States federations of this character could also profitably be developed in various fields; for example, to link up the several metal industrial unions in steel, auto, radio and electric, shipbuilding, etc., into a vast metal workers' alliance with a prospective membership of some 3,000,000; to join together the various transport unions, railroad

orders, maritime workers, truck drivers, bus and street-car men (some 2,500,000 workers), etc., into a broad transport federation; to create a big food workers' federation out of the several million workers eligible to the agricultural, meat-packing, brewery, preserving and other food workers' unions; to form a general communications federation of the postal, radio, telegraph and telephone unions; to build a broad alliance of the many unions and categories of workers (all told at least 3,500,000) in federal, state and municipal service; and possibly a similar federation of the distribution unions.

These broad industrial federations, linking up the closely related national industrial unions, craft unions and federations, would have as their basis of operation the many common interests and tasks of the workers in these industries, including the furthering of organizing campaigns, support of strikes in individual branches of the industry, the development of inter-industry strikes, the support of joint legislation programs, etc. Such broad federations should not be so strongly centralized as individual national industrial unions.

All that has been said in this section of the general question of national industrial federations must be understood as developing only the general principles of the organization of such federations. It is in no sense put forward as a blueprint. The actual course of development in a given industry must be worked out on the basis of the specific conditions in that industry.

#### **VI. THE CITY CENTRAL LABOR COUNCIL**

Local central labor councils, being composed of unions of many industries, naturally tend, even in the A. F. of L., to cut across craft lines and to take on more of a class charac-



ter. This is why the central labor bodies have always been the most progressive organizations in the A. F. of L. But this very fact has also made them very unpopular with the craft union moguls who control the A. F. of L. Since the inception of that organization its craft leaders have lost no opportunity to hamstring the central labor councils and to weaken their functions and importance. These leaders have especially aimed at killing off the broad class tendencies in the C.L.C.'s. They have forced upon them all sorts of craft practices, kept their financial income reduced to paralyzing minimums, jealously refused to give them any control whatever over their component local unions, failed to insist upon all local unions affiliating to the C.L.C.'s, given the C.L.C.'s only one vote apiece at A. F. of L. conventions, and generally checked and prevented their real growth and effective functioning. The C.L.C.'s have been a sort of step-children of the trade union movement.

The new industrial union movement should break with this reactionary policy. The C.L.C.'s should be built up and their basic class character emphasized. They must be given more functions, in the shape of doing organizing work, developing support for striking unions, carrying on political activity and so on, and all local unions should be strictly required to affiliate to them. The C.L.C.'s should be paid a larger per capita tax from their local unions and they should otherwise be extended substantially increased representation and voting power in the national conventions of the general labor movement. The C.L.C.'s should also have the right to hold periodic national conferences among themselves in order to consider the many special problems that they face. In short, the central labor councils should be systematically built up into effective organs of the class struggle, which they have very seldom been in the A. F. of L.

## VII. THE STATE FEDERATION OF LABOR

The state federations of labor, for much the same reasons as in the case of the city central labor councils, have never been developed properly in the A. F. of L. craft union scheme of things. The national craft union leaders, ever keenly jealous of their own autocratic power, have always seen to it that the state federations did not amount to much. The latter, too, like the C.L.C.'s, have been denied necessary funds, proper national convention representation, important functions, etc. In consequence, all over the country they are little more than shells of organizations under the domination of little cliques of craft union bureaucrats. The state federations of labor are capable of performing many valuable services for the working class, and the new industrial union movement should aim to realize their full possibilities.

## VIII. THE NATIONAL LABOR FEDERATION

The fact that the national center of the general labor movement is made up of unions in a large number of industries (as is also the case with C.L.C.'s) presses it normally to take a broader view of the workers' struggle than that of individual craft unions; in fact, to approach a class outlook. From the foundation of the A. F. of L. in 1881 until this day its craft union leaders have sensed the danger to the policy of this tendency toward a class viewpoint and, over the years, they have developed a whole series of measures to hold these class tendencies in check. And their efforts have been only too successful, for the A. F. of L., especially with regard to matters of trade unionism in industry, retains a typical craft union outlook and program.

The basic policy of the craft union reactionaries to kill off tendencies in the A. F. of L. to evolve toward a class pro-

gram is to keep its national center weak and functionless. To accomplish this they have, among other devices: first, built up the principle of craft autonomy into a sort of sacred trade union dogma, leaving the A. F. of L. Executive Council and Convention practically powerless to bring about united action between the component unions; second, they have kept the A. F. of L. per capita so low—one cent per member, per month—that the organization has been too weak financially to carry on serious activities of any sort;\* third, they have so restricted the representation that A. F. of L. conventions have always been little more than mere gatherings of top union bureaucrats who, with all the voting strength in their hands, have voted down for years every progressive measure; fourth, they have constituted the A. F. of L. Executive Council as a small handful of the most hard-boiled craft reactionaries who, when they see fit, as exemplified in the illegal and criminal suspension of the C.I.O. unions in 1936, proceed to take arbitrary action against everything progressive in the labor movement

As a result of this craft union policy to keep the national center weak and thus to destroy its class character, the A. F. of L. has never mobilized the labor movement as a whole to carry out any important tasks. Never in all its history has it, by its own efforts, organized the workers in a single

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\* In consequence of its low per capita rate for its national unions, the A. F. of L. has always been chronically so short of funds that it was forced to the expedient of milking the federal local unions, which pay thirty-five cents per member per month as against the one cent of the national unions. And in order to conserve this income from the federal unions, which constitutes the bulk of its funds, the A. F. of L. Executive Council developed the reactionary policy of refusing national charters to federal locals, as this would mean that, as parts of national unions, they would henceforth pay only one cent per member per month instead of thirty-five.

important industry; nor has it ever displayed real activity in the winning of a great strike: it has always left such matters entirely to its affiliated unions. And politically, the A. F. of L. has ever been about as near a cipher as possible; it has constantly resisted every tendency toward developing political action by the workers as a class, and its so-called political work has amounted to nothing more than milk-sop lobbying for doubtful legislation and left-handed endorsements of shady political candidates. The A. F. of L. is a classical example of how a potentially powerful national labor center can be rendered impotent by craft union policies.

The growing industrial union movement should work toward a totally different form of national organization. Its aim should be to so model the national trade union center that it will truly represent the interests of the whole working class, and not merely those of a few narrow, skilled crafts and of a reactionary trade union bureaucracy who use it for their own purposes at the expense of the great body of the toiling masses.

At the present time the American labor movement is split into warring C.I.O. and A. F. of L. camps. But eventually it will be re-united and when this occurs, whether by the building up of the new C.I.O. center or, more likely, by the general reorganization of the labor movement nationally, so as to consolidate both the C.I.O. and A. F. of L. forces, the industrial unionists and all progressive elements should strive to have the resultant national federation of labor's constitution and practice include the following basic improvements over the traditional A. F. of L. system:

*First:* With regard to the autonomy of the national craft and industrial unions. While it is absolutely necessary that these organizations be accorded a wide autonomy in order

that they may properly conduct their business, nevertheless this autonomy must not become a fetish and it should not be allowed to develop to the point, as it has done in the A. F. of L., where the general labor center is powerless. The national trade union federation should reserve the right to step into critical situations and, if necessary, to mobilize the great strength of the whole movement to solve any particular problem which is too heavy for the union most immediately concerned. It was in accordance with this correct principle that the C.I.O., functioning as a national coordinating center for some fifteen unions, took up militantly the carrying out of great organizing campaigns and strikes in the steel, auto and other industries—tasks which would have been quite beyond the power of individual unions in these respective industries. Such action was something new in the life of American trade unionism. The national labor center should not be merely a postoffice; it must be a real concentration means to unite the vast power of all organized labor.

*Second:* The national trade union federation should be accorded a far larger income than has ever been the case with the A. F. of L. By establishing a per capita tax of five cents per member per month for itself (as against the A. F. of L.'s one cent), the C.I.O. has hit the nail on the head. The additional funds coming from this larger per capita, if properly applied, mean more centralization, more activities, more power and more results generally for the national center and for the whole labor movement.

*Third:* The national convention of the general labor movement should be far more democratic than present-day A. F. of L. conventions. At least 50 per cent of the delegates should be workers directly from the mills, mines, factories, ships and farms. Besides, the central labor councils and state

federations should also be accorded more representation in such conventions.

*Fourth:* The leading committee of the whole trade union movement should be a broad, representative body of not less than fifty members, of whom some 10 per cent should represent the central labor councils and state federations.

*Fifth:* The principles of the initiative, referendum and recall, which will be outlined later on, should apply to the work of the federation's convention, officers and executive committee.

*Sixth:* The national federation center should have far better departmentalization than in the case of the A. F. of L. The departments, like everything else the latter has and does, are utterly inadequate. Its research department is sketchy and conservative; its women's department, the Women's Trade Union League, has never been seriously supported; its Workers' Education Bureau is a plaything of standpatters and reactionaries, and it has no youth department whatever. These evils and shortcomings should be drastically corrected. Earnest work should be begun in all these special spheres of mass activity, so vital to the success of the labor movement as a whole. The general labor center should actively support the progressive mass movements of the youth, women and Negroes. It is characteristic of the C.I.O.'s progressive character that, despite its present deep preoccupation with scores of big organizing campaigns and strikes, it is far more alert in all these fields than is the A. F. of L.

*Seventh:* The national general trade union center of the future should also organize the labor movement's political activities on a far greater and more significant scale than is the case with the A. F. of L. Instead of the national federation having a mere "non-partisan" lobbying committee to beg

crumbs off Congress, it should set out to mobilize the whole working class politically. The C.I.O., true to its growing class character, is increasingly sensitive to the need of the workers to act in politics as a class, and it has taken a step far in advance of the A. F. of L. by its organization of Labor's Non-Partisan League. It supports progressive elements in the Democratic Party and Roosevelt administration. This is a long stride towards independent political action by the workers; but the movement can achieve its true purpose only if it progresses forward to the eventual formation of a national Farmer-Labor Party, which will be the great American People's Front.

*Lastly:* The national labor center should also take up its responsibility definitely as part of the world's labor movement now struggling against the menacing dangers of fascism and war. The A. F. of L.'s traditional policy of non-affiliation internationally is just one more evidence of its narrow, conservative craft policies. In July of this year (1937), the A. F. of L. has belatedly affiliated to the International Federation of Trade Unions (Amsterdam International). This was not motivated by any feelings of international solidarity, however, but by reactionary fear—fear that if it did not so affiliate the C.I.O. would be accepted internationally as the representative national center of the American trade union movement.

## PART TWO

# ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICE OF INDUSTRIAL UNIONISM

**I**N PART ONE of this pamphlet we have discussed primarily the structure of industrial unionism, indicating as we have gone along how closely the organic forms of labor are bound up with their policies and general outlook. Now, in Part Two, let us take up the most important principles by which industrial unionism operates; that is, its methods of conducting its affairs. Here, again, we shall see that these matters, too, are inseparably related to broad questions of union program.

### Discipline

A firm discipline is a basic essential for the success of industrial unionism, as of labor unionism in general. Good organization and discipline give the workers greater confidence in themselves and in each other and hence increase their fighting capacity. Well-drilled soldiers are far better fighters than loosely organized, poorly trained recruits, and the same principle applies to labor unions. The industrial unions will do well, therefore, in the shaping of their activities, to keep in mind the necessity for creating a good discipline among their membership. With ruthless American capitalism to fight, such a discipline will stand them in good stead and, indeed, is a life and death question for them.



## Democracy

To build up this necessary discipline the prime essential is that the industrial unions conduct their affairs in a democratic manner. Trade unionists are not enlisted men and they cannot be disciplined by mere arbitrary command of their leaders. Their discipline must be essentially self-imposed. And such voluntary union discipline can exist in maximum degree only if the workers feel that they are controlling the union's activities by democratic action.

The A. F. of L. craft union leaders have always grossly violated the principles of trade union democracy. The result is that nearly all A. F. of L. unions are dominated by bureaucrats and dictators who, to enforce their arbitrary will and conservative policies upon the membership, have not hesitated often to use sluggers, stealing of elections, packing of conventions and other ruthless methods of coercing the rank and file. This violation of democracy has also given birth to racketeering in the unions and has lowered the tone and effectiveness of the whole labor movement.

To the extent that the industrial unions break with the traditional undemocratic methods of craft union leaders and develop a truly democratic life in their organizations, to that degree they will build up a better mass discipline and achieve the added strength that goes with it. But, of course, in establishing trade union democracy it is not necessary to fly to the other extreme and turn the unions into mere debating societies. The correct policy is: first, a thorough discussion of the problem in hand and, then, a firm enforcement of the decision arrived at. Such a procedure at once guarantees a mass participation in policy-making and a good discipline in applying the policy decided upon. The organization principles contained in this whole pamphlet are based on this general

conception of democratic centralism, which dovetails with the best trade union practice in all countries.

### Education

A good labor discipline necessitates, as we have seen, a thoroughgoing trade union democracy, and such a democracy, in turn, requires an educated rank and file. Discipline, democracy and education go hand in hand in the building of effective labor unionism, and the new, expanding industrial unions should write this elementary truth plainly in all their constitutions and ways of doing business.

The A. F. of L. unions, with few exceptions, have flagrantly neglected the education of their members to the true nature of the capitalist system and the daily problems confronting them as workers. The "philosophy" of the dominant craft leaders is an open endorsement of capitalism, and their conceptions of many of the workers' problems are only the basic ideas of the employers covered over with a thin veneer of trade union phrases. Most of the craft unions have no organized educational departments whatever, and the educational value of their official journals is just about zero.

The industrial unions should, of course, set up quite a different situation. They must begin earnestly the education of their members and also of the broad masses generally. The C.I.O. needle trades unions have done much valuable work in this vital field, but even this is only a start. Every stage of the labor movement—from the local union to the national labor federation—should have a well-organized, actively functioning educational department, working on a mass scale. In this manner, real progress can be made in offsetting the paralyzing effects of the vast stream of propaganda poison that the capitalists are pouring into the work-

ers' minds through press, pulpit, radio, movies, etc., etc. The industrial unions will reap rich dividends from such educational work, in the shape of better working and living conditions for their members, and a bigger and stronger organization in every respect.

### Labor Union Journals

The most important single educational task confronting the industrial unions is to build up a broad and effective labor press. One of the most disastrous weaknesses of the A. F. of L. unions has always been their miserable papers and magazines. The journals of the international unions are, with few exceptions, dry, uninteresting, saturated with insidious employer propaganda, and closed to progressive thought. The local trade union papers, both official and unofficial, are even worse. Many of them are simply parasitic blackmail sheets, corrupt and rotten to the core. Often they shamelessly take money from employers to fight everything progressive in the labor movement; they sell their columns and "labor's endorsement" to any political faker who wants them. Every important city has one or more such contemptible rags. And the low tone for all this degraded system of labor journalism is set by the *American Federationist*, national organ of the A. F. of L. The columns of this magazine are packed with reactionary propaganda, advertisements of union-smashing open shop companies, Red-baiting, misrepresentations of industrial unionism, lying attacks upon the Soviet Union, etc.

One of the great tasks of the C.I.O. industrial union movement is to free American labor from the tentacles of this disgraceful craft union press and to develop a progressive system of journalism worthy of the labor movement. The new labor press should reflect the great upsurge now

developing among the masses; it should make a serious analysis of decaying capitalist society, and teach the workers the way to free themselves from it. It should be a press wide open to the expression of Socialism and Communism. Each national industrial union should have a first class weekly or monthly journal that goes to every member; each city central council needs a clean, progressive weekly organ; the national federation ought to publish a great labor daily paper. With such a powerful and progressive press, organized labor would make real progress in the struggle against the employers and their tremendous propaganda machine.

### **Membership Qualifications**

Among the many harmful practices of A. F. of L. unions is the exclusion of large categories of workers from union membership for reasons of their sex, race, politics, etc. Thus various unions specifically bar women from joining; many more, either openly or covertly, refuse to organize Negroes; still others do not take in young workers; and a whole raft of unions, including the national A. F. of L. itself, have clauses in their constitutions which prohibit the membership of Communists.

These narrow practices are nothing more or less than a reflection of the employers' policy of playing off one group of workers against another and thus weakening them all. They have absolutely no place in the labor movement. They violate the most fundamental principle of unionism—the solidarity of all the workers—and they have done incalculable harm to the unions. They must not be allowed to continue on over into the industrial unions. On the contrary, the new unions should throw these contemptible and harmful prejudices into the ashcan of history.

The industrial unions should open their doors wide to all

workers (except, of course, those barred for spying, scabbing and other dishonorable actions) regardless of their sex, color, race, nationality, age, religion or political opinion. The new unions should extend a warm hand of greeting to the doubly-oppressed Negro workers; they should adopt a more liberal apprenticeship and trade school policy for the youth; they should be the special champions of women and their demands; and, above all, they should be alert not to allow themselves or their officials to sink into the practice of Red-baiting, which is the weapon of all fascists and near-fascists to attack everything that is progressive and effective in the labor movement.

The industrial unions should also take a more intelligent attitude towards unemployed members than the craft unions do. During the depths of the great industrial crisis of the past several years the A. F. of L. unions brutally expelled hundreds of thousands of unemployed members. Then they went further along this wrong road by callously neglecting the demands of the starving unemployed and trailing after the infamous Hoover share-the-work scheme. Contrary to all this wrong course, the industrial unions should base their policy upon the unity of interests and organization of the employed and unemployed. This means that they should retain the unemployed in the unions and fight for their demands. In the next industrial crisis, which already even the capitalist economists recognize to be not so far ahead, the employed and the vast armies of unemployed must present a solid front. There are still some 8,000,000 workers unemployed, and the unions should give active support to their demands and also to the Workers' Alliance, the organization of W.P.A. and unemployed workers.

Some unions, both C.I.O. and A. F. of L., with good intentions, also expel those of their members who join the

state militia. But this is not a sound policy. Why should the workers allow these military bodies to fill up with reactionary elements? It is far better to have within their ranks a percentage of union men, who can then influence the rest favorably towards trade unionism.

### Union Officials

One of the main reasons why the A. F. of L. unions have remained so unprogressive, clinging stubbornly to their horse-and-buggy craft system of unionism in an era of mass production in which this type of organization is hopelessly obsolete, is because they have become heavily encrusted with a conservative bureaucratic leadership that is unresponsive to the needs and interests of the rank and file. To keep themselves in power and to fatten off the unions, these leaders employ a whole series of undemocratic, unproletarian methods that the industrial unions must avoid on pain of a similar stagnation as that which now afflicts the craft unions. Among these harmful practices of corrupt craft officials are: having themselves, by hook or crook, elected to office for life; paying themselves enormous salaries and expenses; handling the union funds as though they were their own personal property; assuming arbitrary power over the membership in various ways; building up executive boards which perpetuate themselves by filling all vacancies through appointment, and by various other democracy-destroying devices that would bring a blush to the face of a Tammany Hall boss.

The health and progress of labor unions demand that their officers be the members' servants, not their masters. To achieve this end the industrial unions should, together with other recommendations made herein, put the following measures into effect: (a) the term of national officers should

not exceed two years (one year for local and shop officials), with the right of re-election; (b) all vacancies of elective offices should be filled only by regular elections, never by appointment; (c) all elections, national and local, should be made by secret ballot and only after due notice to the membership; (d) national officers must not have the power to suspend or expel members, other officers, or local unions—such action should only be taken after regular trials by the proper committees; (e) national organizers should be elected, not appointed, except in emergency cases and then only by action of the national executive board of the union; (f) the salaries of national officials should approximate those of the better-paid skilled workers in the industry, plus a reasonable per diem for road expenses, strict regulations being made to prevent the notorious craft union graft on “expense accounts,” better known as “swindle sheets”; (g) officials who reach the age of 65 years should be retired on pensions; (h) nepotism (employment on the union staffs of relatives of top officials) should be carefully guarded against; (i) the practice of barring women, youth, Negroes and foreign-born from holding union office should be strictly prevented—official leadership must be open to every union member; (j) union officials who affiliate themselves to such union-busting organizations as chambers of commerce and the National Civic Federation, as many craft unions leaders have done, should be expelled from the unions as traitors to the working class.

### Conventions

Democracy in A. F. of L. craft union conventions is more honored in the breach than in the observance. Reactionary union officials have developed a whole series of corrupt devices to maintain their own control and to prevent the will

of the membership from prevailing. This is one of the principal causes for the weakness and unprogressiveness of the craft unions. Of these crooked schemes the following are among the most notorious and harmful: (a) narrowing down the convention delegations largely to paid officials; (b) packing the conventions with delegates from "blue-sky" locals; (c) making the conventions so expensive (by high per diem rates) that they cannot be held often; (d) arbitrarily suppressing the conventions altogether (the Retail Clerks have not held a convention for fifteen years), or by having excessively long intervals between them (eight years between the last two conventions of the Carpenters Union); (e) appointment of all convention committees by the union's president; (f) stalling the conventions along and then rushing the important business through in the last hours; (g) the practice of a thousand parliamentary tricks to kill discussion and to thwart progressive legislation, etc., etc.

To help insure democratic, representative conventions, the industrial unions should adopt, among others, the following measures: (a) national conventions should be held at intervals not to exceed two years; (b) have broad rank-and-file delegations in the convention; (c) publication of the convention agenda and officers' reports at least thirty days before the convention date, so that they may be discussed by the membership; (d) strict financial reports as the basis of local union representation, such reports to be available to the convention delegates; (e) all convention committees to be voted on (and amended if so desired) by the convention delegates; (f) no restrictions upon the introduction of resolutions by local unions before or during the conventions; (g) strict prohibition of all direct and indirect proxy delegates and voting; (h) the right of a 30 per



cent minority of delegates to secure a roll call vote; (i) the holding of the conventions in important centers of the industry, instead of in remote places where delegates find it difficult to attend; (j) convention expenses of delegates to be split 50-50 between the local unions and the national organization; (k) a reasonable per diem of expense for delegates and thus avoidance of petty corruption and great cost of conventions; (l) only local union delegates should vote; officials, as such, should have no votes; (m) no examination of the political opinions of delegates by convention committees as a condition for their seating; (n) the convention to be adjourned only by majority vote, to prevent officials from arbitrarily closing the convention to stifle democratic rule.

The representation of local unions in the convention should be based upon a principle of modified proportional representation. This means that there should be a minimum of delegates allowed to all locals, plus a diminishing ratio of delegates as the locals increase in size. This system is the best protection against the dangers, on the one hand, of a few big locals dominating the convention, and on the other, of domination being exercised by a lot of small, weak locals. This general system of representation should also be applied to central labor councils, state federations, and the national labor federation.

*(Add to paragraph 2, page 47.)*

When convention roll call votes are taken, however, the various delegates should be allowed votes on the basis of, for example, one vote to each one hundred of their actual membership.

they will but use them.

cent minority of delegates to secure a roll call vote; (*i*) the holding of the conventions in important centers of the industry, instead of in remote places where delegates find it difficult to attend; (*j*) convention expenses of delegates to be split 50-50 between the local unions and the national organization; (*k*) a reasonable per diem of expense for delegates and thus avoidance of petty corruption and great cost of conventions; (*l*) only local union delegates should vote; officials, as such, should have no votes; (*m*) no examination of the political opinions of delegates by convention committees as a condition for their seating; (*n*) the convention to be adjourned only by majority vote, to prevent officials from arbitrarily closing the convention to stifle democratic rule.

The representation of local unions in the convention should be based upon a principle of modified proportional representation. This means that there should be a minimum of delegates allowed to all locals, plus a diminishing ratio of delegates as the locals increase in size. This system is the best protection against the dangers, on the one hand, of a few big locals dominating the convention, and on the other, of domination being exercised by a lot of small, weak locals. This general system of representation should also be applied to central labor councils, state federations, and the national labor federation.

### **Initiative, Referendum and Recall**

Correct constitutional laws alone will not insure a union's being democratic, for in the last analysis this depends upon the alertness and political development of the membership. But such laws are vital, nevertheless, as they place in the hand of the rank and file effective democratic weapons, if they will but use them.

An important democratic system that the industrial unions should develop is the initiative, referendum and recall. This means that the membership retains the right at all times to initiate new policy, to vote on any proposals that may be before the union or its executive, and to recall any officer from his post by a majority vote. These effective democratic measures have never flourished in the narrow, conservative A. F. of L. unions, although a few unions (miners, machinists, needle trades, etc.), have some traces of them.

The referendum should work thus: the national convention of the union should have full power to act upon all questions. It should elect all general officers, make constitutional amendments, set assessments, decide upon strikes, and generally establish the union's policy. But a substantial minority of the delegates, not less than 30 per cent, should have the right, if they so desire, to have any of the convention's decisions referred to a vote of the general membership.

Certain basic matters, such as important strikes and strike settlements, questions of the union's national affiliation, heavy assessments, etc., should as a matter of settled policy be referred to the membership for a general vote. The national executive board of the union (as well as the convention) should also be required to submit all major matters of policy to a national vote of the members, and a given percentage of the local unions should have the right to demand that any decision of the executive board be referred to a general vote.

The initiative should operate to give the membership the right, especially between conventions, to initiate new policy. Thus, on the demand of a given number of locals, say 10 per cent or so, the national executive board should stand

instructed to consider any proposed policy and, if need be, to submit it to a general membership vote.

The recall should be regulated in such a manner that the membership, in a given local union or nationally, should have the right to initiate a vote to recall from office at any time any official—national, district, local or shop—without formal trial proceedings.

### **Control of Strikes**

Strikes are the basic means of a labor union to improve the conditions of the workers. The effectiveness of any given union depends, in last analysis, upon its ability to bring production to a standstill in its craft or industry and thus to halt the employers' golden stream of profits. And precisely because of their great importance, strikes put the unions, their leaders and their policies, to the acid test.

With the unions confronting the great power of the employers and the state, strikes should not be entered into lightly. Aside from questions of strategy—of seizing upon the right time to strike and of making all essential technical preparations—the most fundamental necessity of a strike is that it have the full backing of the workers involved. This means that the workers must have the decisive say as to whether or not they shall enter into struggle, with all its dangers and hardships. The power to declare strikes and to call them off must rest finally with the workers themselves.

From every angle this democratic control of strikes is necessary to the health of the union. One of the most prolific sources of general weakness and official corruption in the A. F. of L. unions is the usurped power of business agents and other officials to call strikes on or off without consulting the rank and file. Such arbitrary action is the road

to defeat of the union, demoralization of the workers, and corruption of the officials.

Before a strike is launched a vote should be taken of the workers involved, and before any settlement is made, either during the strike or prior to its calling, the workers themselves must have the right to decide whether or not it is acceptable. Trade union democracy reaches its highest and most vital expression in the control of strikes, and to assure democracy in this fundamental matter the industrial unions should make all necessary provisions.

But to state that the workers must decide upon striking or not striking does not mean that every local union should have the right to embark indiscriminately upon strikes. Discipline and organized action must prevail or the union will be broken up. The best practice is that minor local strikes may be called by local unions and district councils, but that more important local strikes require the sanction of the national executive board, subject to the referendum procedure of the union. National strike action should only be determined upon after the matter has been passed favorable by a national convention of the union and endorsed by a general referendum vote.

Strikes should not only be democratically called on and off, but also democratically managed. Broad strike committees (on a national, local, mill scale), with a heavy representation of rank-and-file strikers, are incomparably more effective (and democratic) than the narrow little cliques of officials that commonly run A. F. of L. strikes. Where there are more than one union in an industry, all should be represented on the joint strike committee. Likewise, picketing and other strike activities should be carried on upon a democratic (*i.e.*, mass) basis.

## Arbitration

Direct negotiations are the most satisfactory method for unions to deal with employers over the workers' demands. Arbitration should not be resorted to except where no other means are available, because employers, with their money and influence, have an uncanny record of winning over to their side the "odd" men on arbitration boards. Such people are usually middle class liberal elements, who, despite their fair-sounding words, in the pinch display employer sympathies. The workers, especially in A. F. of L. craft unions, have lost many a battle by a naive reliance upon slick-tongued arbiters.

Employers are clever enough with their arbitration weapon. Usually their policy is to offer arbitration to strong unions and to refuse it to weak ones. Common sense would therefore dictate to the workers to themselves develop a policy based upon a reverse application of that principle.

Before accepting arbitration in a strike situation, the industrial unions should make sure of the following elementary considerations: (a) not to go into arbitration at all unless they are certain that they cannot, by a straight out fight by the union, force the employers to make the needed concessions to the workers through direct negotiations; (b) compel the acceptance by the employers beforehand of as many of the union's proposals as they can, especially the question of union recognition, and thus limit as far as possible the number of demands to be arbitrated; (c) make a last ditch fight to get the best possible composition of the arbitration board; (d) make it clear that an unsatisfactory award will not pacify the workers.

The industrial unions should be on the alert to oppose all forms of compulsory and semi-compulsory arbitration.

Craft union leaders, especially of the railroad unions, largely look upon arbitration as a sort of life-saver, and they have openly cooperated with the employers to entangle the railroad unions with practically compulsory arbitration laws. Especially now does the danger of compulsory arbitration become very acute. Many employers, seeing the rapid progress of the C.I.O. in organizing the mass production industries, believe that the halcyon days of the open shop are about over and they think that the best way to cripple the unions would be to force compulsory arbitration and other forms of legal control upon them. This explains the appearance of many bills for state incorporation of unions, for limitation of picketing and the right to strike, etc., all of which tend in the general direction of state-controlled, fascist unions.

Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty. At all costs the unions must defend their right to strike. Under no circumstances should they allow themselves to be hamstrung and paralyzed by anti-strike, compulsory arbitration laws and similar practices.

### **Union-Employer Agreements**

When the industrial unions sign agreements with the employers they should live up to them. But, at the same time, they should be under no illusions as to the "sacredness" of such contracts, which A. F. of L. leaders are never done harping upon. The plain fact is that employers generally consider agreements with unions as mere matters of convenience; they sign them when they must and violate them when they think they can get away with it. They constantly "chisel" on wage, hour and working conditions while an agreement is in force, and they do not hesitate to repudiate it altogether if they believe the situation is favorable for

doing so. Thus the Pennsylvania Railroad flagrantly violated the national railroad agreement of 1920 and was instrumental in provoking the nationwide shopmen's strike of 1922, and the Pittsburgh Coal Company repudiated the U.M.W.A. Jacksonville agreement and caused the national bituminous miners' strike of 1927. Besides these historic cases, innumerable other instances of the employers' disregard for agreements with trade unions could be cited.

The lesson from this is that trade unions must be alert at all times to enforce their agreements themselves. Within the framework of the agreement they must constantly press for improved conditions. Here a well-working shop steward system is vitally important. Any tendency of a union to rely upon the employers' "fairness" and "honesty" in living up to the terms of an agreement is bound to be disastrous to the workers' conditions and the stability of the union.

The industrial unions, especially those in the mass production industries, should strive to secure general national agreements covering their whole industry. Unless this is done, the employers will play off one section of the workers against the others. Thus, for instance, where no national agreement exists, when the workers in a certain plant or company demand better conditions they will be met by the very difficult argument that the employer is paying as much as his competitors. Thus, little can be wrung from him. And the same thing happens when it comes his competitors' turn to meet the union committee. The craft unions have been up against this situation for years, with the employers playing off one craft or one section of the industry against the others in order to keep the conditions of all as low as possible. The answer to this problem is national agreements covering whole industries. This means that the steel, auto, rubber, textile and other industrial unions should definitely



aim at such general agreements for their respective industries.

In general, union-employer agreements should not run for long periods, especially not in times of rising prices like this. Two years, at most, is long enough, usually. The industrial unions should not go in for the long-term agreements (five to ten years in some cases) that craft unions practice, to their own detriment. Agreements should also contain thirty or sixty-day re-opening clauses.

In industries when several unions exist (whether C.I.O., A. F. of L., or independent), every effort should be made to bring them all under joint agreements, or at least under agreements expiring at the same time. Under no circumstances should one union stay at work while another in the same plant is striking, as we see being done daily by craft unions. Such "union strike-breaking" has broken hundreds of strikes and it must be stopped. Good union workers must not walk through picket lines; they should arrange their unions' strategy so that they all move simultaneously in a given industry.

In signing agreements with employers the industrial unions should beware of inserting clauses prescribing financial penalties on the union or its members for unauthorized strikes. Long experience teaches that such clauses exercise a reactionary effect on the life of a union. In handling the question of unauthorized strikes the union's own disciplinary powers are amply sufficient. Especially now, when the Liberty League pack of ultra-reactionaries are trying to cripple the unions by making them "legally responsible," (that is, by binding them hand and foot with legal restrictions), the unions should be on guard against the insertion of penalty clauses in their agreements. And especially, the unions should not include in their agreements

clauses discriminating against workers because of age, sex, race or political opinion.

Union recognition in agreements with employers may assume several forms: (a) the collective bargaining right only for the union's own members, as in effect with some new C.I.O. unions, is only of a preliminary character and should be strengthened, as it exposes the union to the rivalry of company unionism under various guises; (b) the collective bargaining right for all the workers of a given company, craft or industry, is a livable form of recognition in force in many industries and it is essentially the system under which the railroad craft unions operate; (c) the preferential union shop, under which union members are given preference in employment, is a more advanced and effective type of union recognition, and has long been used in some industries; (d) the check-off, by which employers deduct union dues from the workers' pay, is confined mostly to coal mining and it was developed there (after a long struggle by the U.M.W.A.) largely because mine operators had previously established the practice of making deductions from the workers' pay for powder, tools, company store supplies, etc.; (e) the "closed" shop, under which only union members are employed (widely developed in building, printing, transport, etc.), is the most favorable form of recognition for a union and it is the type the industrial unions should strive towards in formulating their agreements. But it must always be borne in mind that even the best form of union recognition by an employer is not of itself sufficient to maintain the union intact—only sound union policies and good organization work generally can do that.

#### **Initiations, Dues, Transfers, Label**

Initiation fees should be moderate, ranging from \$1 (or

even less) during organizing campaigns, not to exceed \$10 or \$15 when the union is well-established. The industrial unions should never fall into the bad practice of the craft unions of charging enormous initiation fees (sometimes as much as \$1,000) in order to keep workers out of the unions. At all times the unions' books must be open to receive new members. "Job trust" policies are one of the reasons for the weakness of craft unionism.

Union dues should also be moderate; not the excessive rates charged in skilled workers' craft unions (sometimes as much as \$10 to \$15 per month). On the other hand, the industrial unions should not be "cheap dues" organizations; for they must have ample funds to conduct their activities. In most cases \$1 dues per month is about right, with lower rates for the poorer-paid workers. Care should be also exercised not to load up the membership with needless assessments.

Transfers from local to local and union to union should be free and universal. This correct system should be introduced immediately among the more closely related unions, and then gradually extended to cover other unions. The industrial union should beware of the infamous A. F. of L. craft union permit system, by which regular good-standing members of one local (especially in the building trades) are not allowed to transfer into another local of the same international but must pay a dollar or two a day for a "permit" to work within its jurisdiction. Much of the money raised by this reactionary tax finds its way into the pockets of corrupt business agents and union secretaries.

The trade union movement should have one label to indicate that a given product is union-made. The craft unions, true to their spirit of particularism and individualism, have no less than fifty labels. There should be a universal union

label and it should be automatically given to all shops that have signed union agreements with their workers, and should be similarly withdrawn from an employer when any union of his workers declares him unfair.

### Union Finances

One of the stifling influences in many craft unions is the careless and dishonest way the organizations' funds are often handled by their officials. Time and again it has been exposed how such people help themselves to union dues, initiation fees, permit money, etc., to the tune of thousands of dollars. All such demoralizing looseness should be strictly guarded against in the industrial unions.

The financial department should be highly developed and have business-like arrangements instituted nationally and locally to take proper care of union moneys. Detailed financial reports (not vague general summaries) should be issued frequently by the national office, and standard monthly reports to be submitted to all local unions. The union's funds should be deposited in certain designated banks in the union's name (not in the name of some official who then draws the interest). Traveling auditors should periodically check up on the handling of funds by the local unions, instructing them in the use of a standard bookkeeping system, organizing their auditing committees, etc. All national and important local financial reports should be certified by reputable public accountants. All officials who handle funds, locally or nationally, should be adequately bonded by reliable bonding companies, and defaulting secretaries should be prosecuted.

The union should operate nationally (and also as far as possible, locally) on a budget basis, regularly allocating specified percentages of its income into certain designated

funds. Thus, special funds should be built up for the union's journal, organization work, educational activities, strikes, sick or death benefits, etc.

*Strike funds:* Craft unions often depend primarily upon paying relatively large strike benefits for winning their strikes. But industrial unions, because of their larger size and their broader scope of strike action, do not and cannot rely so much on winning strikes by virtue of strong strike benefits, but instead by the paralyzing power of their strikes. Nevertheless, they have a very acute need for funds during strikes (huge strikes of miners have sometimes lasted from six months to a year) and provisions for this financial need should be made by building up strong strike funds.

*Sick and death benefits:* The industrial unions, in some cases at least, may find it practicable to realize the stabilizing effect that comes from small sick and death benefits. But they must not overload themselves with such fraternal features, as this can then hinder the growth of the unions. The new unions should be militant fighters for social security legislation and active supporters of proletarian fraternal organizations, such as the International Workers Order.

The local unions should pay approximately 50 per cent of their dues to the national office of the union as per capita tax, and about the same proportion of their initiation fees. The remainder, after deductions for regular local expenses, they should be allowed to spend as they may wish. One of the progress-killing measures of craft union leaders is to forbid local unions to expend any funds except for such purposes as reactionary bureaucratic officials see fit to endorse.

### PART THREE

## TRADE UNION UNITY AND THE PEOPLE'S FRONT

THE C.I.O. has made its splendid progress in organizing the workers in the mass production industries because it has learned important lessons from past experience in these industries and has applied these lessons in its organizing work and strikes. Now, in order to consolidate these gains, to establish the new industrial unions on a solid basis and to make further progress, it is necessary that the structure and organizational practice of these organizations be developed on sound principles. The new unions must not carry over the reactionary systems of the craft unions; they must develop organizational forms and methods corresponding to their own tasks and social outlook. The foregoing pages indicate the main lines along which this should be done.

The proposals in this pamphlet are addressed chiefly to the industrial unions. But obviously they also apply in large measure to the craft unions. The progressive members of these unions should work inside them to rebuild them as much as possible along the lines of democratizing them, federating them together and developing united action among them; looking toward their eventual amalgamation into industrial unionism, led by progressive officials.

In these pages much sharp criticism has been made of

the craft unions; but this has been directed against the reactionary top bureaucrats who control them, the Greens, Wolls, Whartons, Freys, Hutchesons, Ryans, etc. We must never forget that the mass of members comprising the craft unions (and also the bulk of the lower officialdom) are honest and sincere workers striving earnestly to set up the best possible system of unionism. They are quite responsive to industrial union arguments.

We must, therefore, strive to advance the development of both the C.I.O. and A. F. of L. unions. But we must also, at the same time, work to unite these two warring wings of the labor movement into one solid movement. Trade union unity would enormously advance the cause of labor. The C.I.O. alone has accomplished tremendous gains. It has developed itself into a stronger labor center than the A. F. of L. numerically, in strategic position in industry, and in general political outlook. But if the whole trade union movement, now numbering some 6,000,000 members, were united on a sound basis, it would be irresistible. It could easily sweep new millions into its ranks and strengthen the workers' position and living conditions vastly on every front.

The C.I.O. has become the chief center of the American labor movement, and its organizing program is sound. Manifestly, unity must be brought about on the basis of the elementary proposition of the C.I.O. that the workers in the mass production industries be organized into industrial unions. This is no longer a debatable question; the C.I.O. has demonstrated its correctness in practice. The A. F. of L. Executive Council has been grossly wrong at every stage of the controversy. First, it refused to adopt industrial unionism for these industries although forty years' experience showed the futility of craft unionism there; next, it

ruthlessly, arbitrarily and illegally suspended the C.I.O. unions when they correctly started out to organize the unorganized in the jurisdiction of their unions; next, it did its best to sabotage the C.I.O. organizing campaigns and strikes and has been a real hindrance to the work. Now it is openly joining with the furious campaign of the employers to destroy the C.I.O. and its component organizations now that they have succeeded in organizing the bulk of the workers in steel, auto, etc.

The A. F. of L. leaders must stop their suicidal war against the C.I.O. Their reactionary course does not represent either the interest or the will of their own membership, much less that of the working class in general. It is an injury to the present struggle of the workers and a threat to the whole future of the trade union movement. The A. F. of L. rank-and-file members should demand that trade union unity be brought about on the basis of the C.I.O. proposals, and that in order to accomplish it, a great convention be held of C.I.O., A. F. of L., Railroad Brotherhoods, and all independent unions. At such a great unity convention the entire labor movement could and would take a tremendous step forward; it would modernize, democratize, reorganize itself and thereby become incomparably more effective.

Meanwhile, while fighting for a general unification of the trade union movement, all militant and progressive elements should also strive for common action in the everyday struggle. There should be a united front between the A. F. of L. and C.I.O. unions in their strikes and organizing campaigns. They should come together wholeheartedly in joint election tickets and in support of their common legislative demands. They should resist all efforts of the Executive Council to expel the C.I.O. unions and to split the central labor councils and state federations. Such unity in action at the bottom is



the best preparation for the final unification of the whole labor movement.

Trade union unity has now become a most urgent necessity, not only in order that the workers may advance as rapidly as possible, but also so that labor can defend itself from the swiftly gathering forces of reaction and incipient fascism. Every employer is encouraged to attack the workers because the labor movement is split. The rise of the dangerous vigilante movement, the ferocious opposition to President Roosevelt's Supreme Court bill, the violence used against labor in many strikes, the flood of reactionary bills introduced into Congress and in various state legislatures, the desperate efforts to turn the farmers and middle class against labor, are all threatening signs which the workers, on pain of disaster, must pay attention to. In the face of such a situation for the A. F. of L. to go ahead with its war upon the C.I.O. is a crime against the working class.

The split trade union movement *must* be unified. And this unity must go still further, beyond the ranks of the working class. A great People's Front is necessary. The trade unions should join hands with the farmers, the small business people and the white-collar elements and set afoot a movement that will lead to the establishment of a broad national Farmer-Labor Party. The farmers and lower middle class must not be surrendered to the Liberty League reactionaries. Only by such a broad People's Front can the growing reaction and fascist movement be checked, the democratic rights of the people be preserved and extended, and the masses be started along the way to a new and better prosperity.

Stormy days are ahead for the toiling masses everywhere, and unity in our ranks is a life-and-death question. The world capitalist system (including that of the United States) is fast breaking down. The present economic "prosperity"

is only temporary. It is largely based on the armament, munitions industries and it will soon be followed by a deep industrial crisis that will far exceed in devastating effects the crash of 1929. Fascism is on the rampage all over the capitalist world, and a frightful, murderous war threatens daily to engulf all humanity in a new and far more terrible bloodbath than that of 1914. Already the fascist murderers have drenched Spain and China in blood and they are ready to plunge the whole world into even more deadly war.

All this shows clearly that the capitalist system is in decay. It has become a murderous brake upon civilization. It must be abolished and socialism established. Socialism, by wiping out the capitalist ownership of industry and exploitation of the toiling masses that are the modern cause of poverty, war, fascism and innumerable other social disasters, will launch a new era of happiness and progress in the world. The Russian workers and peasants, with their great Communist Party at their head, have dealt the first smashing blow against the capitalist system. They are the trail blazers of socialism. The workers and the other exploited masses of the whole world will, sooner than we realize, follow their glorious example.

*August 10, 1937*

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