

Spotlight on New Orleans

The AFL and World Labor Unity

By WM. Z. FOSTER

Forces are now shaping up that may possibly result in a shift in policy by the AFL on the question of international trade union unity. During the war years, despite strong internal pressure to take part in developing an all-United Nations labor solidarity, the AFL executive council, dominated in this respect by such professional anti-Sovieteers as Woll, Hutcheson and Dubinsky, has clung to a policy of refusing to deal with the Soviet trade unions, upon the flimsy pretext that they are not real labor organizations. Another prong of the AFL policy has been to claim the full right to represent all American workers internationally, thereby barring the CIO and Railroad Brotherhoods.



However, events have occurred that have cut the ground from beneath this reactionary policy. So that now, instead of being able to block the formation of a world organization of labor by refusing to sit in with the Russian unions or to recognize the rights of the CIO, the AFL is running the danger of being isolated from the rest of the world labor movement.

Previously, the AFL leaders relied upon the support of the British

trade union leaders, especially Sir Walter Citrine, to prevent the establishment of a world trade union organization without the participation of the AFL. So the latter was in a position to play dog-in-the-manger, which it did. Consequently, international labor solidarity was sabotaged by the AFL leaders all through the war. But now the top British union officials, under powerful pressure from the workers in Britain and throughout Europe, seem convinced that they must participate in setting up a world labor organization, whether the AFL goes along or not. Hence, both the Soviet trade unions and the CIO are sending delegates to the world labor conference scheduled to be held in London next February.

All of which puts the bellies of the AFL reactionary leaders right up against the buzz saw. They have the hard alternative of either eating their reactionary policy by sending regular delegates or observers to the London conference, or of finding themselves far out upon a limb of isolation.

RISING OPPOSITION

The troubles of the professional red-baiters in the AFL executive council, who have dictated its international policy, are also daily increasing, because of a rising opposition throughout the AFL. Even in the chambers of the executive council itself this new spirit for a get-together with the Soviet trade unions and the CIO and Railroad Brotherhoods in a real world labor organization was voiced by Dan Tobin, president of the Teamsters Union, with his demand that the whole question of international labor unity be reopened.

Participation by the AFL in the London conference is, of course, very necessary for the strengthening of labor's ranks internationally to help solve the many burning problems confronting the world. There can be no doubt that the AFL membership would vote almost unanimously for AFL participation in London. But, naturally, the Wolls, Greens, Hutchesons, et al, will be careful to see to it that the members get no such opportunity to express their sentiments.

A policy of isolationism by the AFL, leaving it outside the main current of world labor, would be most inconvenient also for Woll, Hutcheson and Dubinsky. For one thing, these worthies realize that, especially since the reelection of President Roosevelt, isolationism in general is "out" in the United States and that if the AFL continues its isolationist policy it is bound to get into trouble with the internationalist-minded forces in its own ranks.

Moreover, these AFL reactionaries also realize that with the liberation of many countries already accomplished and with the German phase of the war approaching its end, many vital problems of postwar reconstruction will be taken up by the

London Labor Conference, including the reorganization of the trade union movement in France, Italy, Belgium, Holland, etc. The AFL reactionaries will want to get their hand in all this, if only to carry on their favorite fight against the Soviet Union and the progressive forces throughout the world.

ISSUE FACING THEM

How will the New Orleans convention now in session at New Orleans handle the thorny question of international affiliation? Will the progressive forces, those who led in the fight for the reelection of President Roosevelt, be able to compel the reactionary council majority to send a couple of real delegates to London? Will the reactionaries themselves, realizing that to continue their disruptive work, they must get in the main stream of world labor, delegate some of their own stripe to the coming international conference? Or will the executive council continue its present incredible policy of abstention, in the vain hope that by this dog-in-the-manger policy they can keep the workers of the world from uniting their forces around progressive policies?

One thing is clear: The unions of the American Federation of Labor must be represented at the London conference. If the executive council and the AFL convention refuse to send representatives, then the respective trade unions themselves should do so, sending either regular or fraternal delegates. AFL members and organizations should let the council hear their opinions on this basic question.

'Daily' Staff Plays Host to Readers

The staff of The Daily Worker will be host to the paper's readers at a party Wednesday night, Thanksgiving Eve, at the Newspaper Guild Club, 40 E. 40th St. The affair, sponsored by The Daily Worker Unit of the Guild, is being held to raise funds for gifts for men and women in the armed services from The Worker staff.

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