

Industrial Union Propaganda League

Craft Unionism in Australia to-day presents a piteous spectacle. Having failed to maintain the workers' standard of living during the war years, a period comparatively favorable for winning economic concessions, its utter collapse was to be expected when faced with the economic offensive which present conditions enable the employers to take. That Unionism as a fighting arm of the proletariat is at present in a state of complete breakdown nobody acquainted with its recent numerous compromises, defeats and retreats will deny. It is true that the Unions still exist, numerically as strong as ever, each bent on pursuing its own course, irrespective of the needs and requirements of the industrial movement as a whole, hoping against hope that it may somehow or other persuade the Arbitration Court of the "reasonableness" of its case as compared with that of the employers, but for all practical purposes, the so-called organised Labor movement at the present moment lies prostrate at the feet of the employing class.

The Judges of the Arbitration Tribunals are not slow in taking advantage of this helplessness. Their readiness to study the "requirements of industry"—in other words, the maintenance of profits at the level of the war period—and their refusal to listen to any appeal for the amelioration of the workers' conditions, are not so much evidence of the true function of the institutions over which they preside, as their arrogance and contempt for the workers when making their oracular pronouncements.

Far from engendering a spirit of rebellion, this studied insolence would appear to make craft union officialdom even more servile in its attitude. Whenever a spontaneous revolt occurs amongst the rank and file, frantic appeals are made by these officials for the observance of awards, and dismal pictures are drawn of the results which may follow in the trail of this or that functionary's displeasure. In periods of industrial activity, when a rise in wages must necessarily follow reduced competition in the labor market, these gentry point to the Arbitration Court as an institution specially ordained to improve the workers' standard of life, when as a matter of fact it acts as a drag, by the utilisation of awards and agreements, on the upper trend of wages due to economic conditions temporarily favorable. On the other hand, when those conditions have changed, when unemployment is rife, and the employers open the attack, taking advantage of Labor's strange faith in Arbitration Courts, Craft Unionism through its officials raises a host of objections to any suggestion of concerted action, and allows the Unions to be defeated one by one in tragic succession. Thus are the workers perpetually ground between the upper and nether millstones of the cowardly and vacillating policy of Craft Union leadership in times of economic pressure, and its utter inability to advance to the attack, even when circumstances are most favorable.

Over

Fred Hancock Papers
ML MS 772 / 21

Nor does the mere adoption of the O.B.U. Preamble by the A.W.U. and other organisations mean that a more militant spirit is manifesting itself so far as the officials of these Unions are concerned, much less does it show that the conversion of these organisations into Unions organised along the lines of industry is seriously contemplated. On the contrary, recent developments in the Labor movement in Australia, notoriously the Melbourne and Brisbane Conferences, clearly show the shallowness and insincerity of these new converts to the principles of Industrial Unionism. The files of the Capitalist Press, as well as the so-called Labor Press of Australia, for the past ten years testify to the rabid and relentless hatred with which Industrial Union propagandists have been pursued by these self-same gentry, who now expect us to believe in their miraculous conversion. The adoption of the O.B.U. Preamble was merely an attempt to throw dust in the eyes of the militant element in the industrial movement by appearing to subscribe to revolutionary principles, while in reality determined to pursue the same old path—a path whose tortuous course is already strewn with milestones marking the butchery and betrayal of the working class of Australia.

It was recently remarked by the President of the Third International that the fate of the Capitalist regime depends on the attitude of the industrially organised workers and the success or otherwise of the influence exercised by their reactionary leaders. Nowhere can the truth of this dictum be better perceived than in Australia, and nowhere is there more need for a movement which shall exclusively devote its attention to the infusing of a new spirit of aggressiveness and militancy into the existing organisations, as well as actively participating in the work of transforming them into industrial Unions.

The Industrial Union Propaganda League is being formed with this aim, and would direct the attention of all militant workers to the Programme of Action (shortly to be published by the League) recently adopted by the 1st Congress of the Red Trade Union International at Moscow, if for no other purpose than to contrast it with the emasculated policy of the recent All-Australian Trade Union Conference. No class-conscious worker will have any doubt that victory in his struggles against the coming onslaughts of the Capitalist class, as well as his ultimate emancipation, depends upon the success with which this programme, endorsed at Moscow by representatives of the world's proletariat, is translated into reality.

Fellow Unionists of Australia: The Industrial Union Propaganda League calls upon you to rally to the fight.

For further information apply to Tom Flynn, Secretary,
Industrial Union Propaganda League, 15 Bay Street, Ballarat.

(Sgd.) TOM FLYNN

(On behalf the League)

12/10/21

Look out for "Direct Action," appearing shortly

UNION

Industrial Union, 15 Erskine St. Sydney