

New Industrial Union to Be Organized (June 22, 1905)

The industrial union to be organized at Chicago the latter part of this month is looked forward to with increasing interest among workingmen, and attracting more general attention than any other event in the labor world. By many it is hailed with joy, and by others with scorn and derision, according to the point of view, but the fact remains that it will be largely attended by the most progressive union men of all trades and occupations, and that it will mark an epoch in the history of labor unionism.

The new union will be organized along industrial lines and will embrace all workers of whatever color or sex; it will not be a federation of unions, but a compact body of united workers, class-conscious and self-governing.

Will the new organization be a rival of the American Federation of Labor? Not at all. It will be a labor organization whose sole object will be to advance the material interests of the working class and ultimately to emancipate that class from wage-slavery.

The trade union, like every other organic thing, is subject to the laws of evolution. The trade unions of the past, good in their day, chiefly for what they have led to, are no longer adequate to the demands of the workers, and the evidence of this fact is so palpable that no intelligent workingman can fail to observe it.

Not only this, but the old union movement has become positively reactionary and is largely used in the interest of the capitalist class to the detriment of the workers who sustain it and whose interests are supposed to be conserved by it.

For a concrete illustration it is only necessary to point out the fact that the coal operators are the staunchest supporters of the miners' union, collect its dues, and keep a watchful eye upon its operations; and this for reasons so self-evident, when the principles and policy of the union are considered, that they readily suggest themselves.

According to the miners' union, the interests of the operators and miners are identical, and the object of the union is to promote these alleged mutual interests, and if this be the correct working class view, then it is highly commendable that the operators have such a friendly care for the

miners' union and take pains to keep it in efficient working order. But it is not the correct view from the miners' standpoint, and a moment's reflection will prove it.

The economic interests of operators and miners are not only not identical, but diametrically opposite. The operators want as large a share of the product of the mines as they can get; the miners, upon the other hand, want as large a share of the product as they can get. Here they stand, face to face, fighting over the division of the product and every joint conference proves that each side contests every inch of ground to the bitter end.

The operators need the miners to dig coal for them, and buy their labor-power as cheaply as they can. The economic interests of these two classes clash and we have in consequence the class struggle with its daily record of strikes, boycotts, lockouts, injunctions, riots, and bloodshed, and in the presence of these indisputable facts it is puerile and stupid, or designing and misleading, to talk about identity of interests between the exploiting operators and the exploited miners. As well talk of the identity of interests of a footpad and his victim.

If the interests of the operators and miners are identical, then the operators' association and the miners' union should merge into one and the same organization.

In the evolution of industry the various trades are more and more losing their separate identity and being interwoven and interlocked in harmonious cooperation, based on the subdivision and specialization of labor. The printer and the machinist used to represent distinct and widely different trades, and they then quite naturally had separate unions to represent their separate trades. Since the introduction of the typesetting machine they have been brought into very close relation, practically merging in machine tenders, and their unions have clashed and will again and again in disputes over jurisdiction.

It is vain to attempt to maintain the old form of trade unionism, based upon a mode of production that has passed away. The trades are losing their identity, the lines that separated them are being obliterated, and, in spite of themselves, the workers of all kinds are being organized into great armies of cooperative labor, and the labor union must follow this industrial development and express the various stages of its progress or fail of its purpose and pass out of existence.

That the present trade union movement is sadly behind the times and palpably inefficient requires no argument to demonstrate; the conditions and tendencies speak for themselves.

The coal miners in Ohio and Indiana are allowed to work but an average of a day or two a week, and their condition is deplorable, as the deep mutterings of discontent among them abundantly proves; while the press dispatches report that the miners in the anthracite region have become discouraged and disgusted with the outlook and have deserted the union in droves.

The total collapse of the Fall River strike and the awful destitution and suffering incident to it were not mitigated by the comforting assurances of union leaders that it was not as bad as it might have been; nor will its lessons escape the thinking element of the defeated unions, thousands of whom recognize the inherent weakness of craft unionism in the presence of combined capital, and are reading in their bitter fate the mockery of a unionism that divides them and are hearkening to the stern command of sense and logic to close up the gaps which craft unions leave between them and unite in solid class-conscious array in the bonds of industrial unionism.

The utter route of the union employees in the subway strike in New York is another striking inefficiency of the old form of unionism. These workers had lost faith in their national organizations and confidence in their leaders, and went out on strike on their own account. The power house employees, organized in separate unions, remained at work while their brothers were being ruthlessly slaughtered. The national leaders upbraided the local leaders and the local leaders repudiated the national leaders, while the 6,000 or more union men were mowed down, figuratively speaking and otherwise, by an army of Cossack strikebreakers under the command of a trained guerrilla, and while Mr. Belmont, the American Vicar of Rothschild, smiled serenely upon the scene and drew inspiration for his subsequent speech to the National Civic Federation, in grand banquet assembled, proclaiming himself a union labor man and proving it to the evident satisfaction of the labor leaders in attendance.

That kind of labor unionism suits Mr. Belmont to his heart's fondest desire, and it suits every other labor exploiter in the land.

Does it suit the working class, who furnish the victims for these union shambles?

All the great strikes in the recent past have resulted in wretched compromise or flat failure. Scarcely an exception can be cited to relieve the gloomy monotony of disaster.

Such power of resistance as the union still possesses is waning and, to destroy even the last vestige of this, President Parry of the citizens' alliance and President Post of the manufacturers' association have organized their capitalist class and are making their onslaughts upon all legislative measures proposed by the unions and upon the unions themselves, especially in strikes, when all the capitalists combine to crush the workingmen involved, which they find it easy enough to accomplish with their united capitalist union against the craft-divided union, or rather, disunion, of the workers.

It should here be noted that these lessons of defeat are not without value. Parry and Post may crush the craft unions, but they will not crush the union spirit of the working class; on the contrary, they will fan that into a flame of industrial unionism, a unionism that combines and solidifies the workers on the basis of the class struggle and marshals these workers for the conflict upon the industrial field, the political field, and every other field until Parry and Post and their class are put to rout and the capitalist system is overthrown and wage-slavery wiped from the earth.

In plain words, the united capitalists will be confronted by the united workers.

The sympathetic strike will be of the past and upon this point at least we will satisfy the yearning desire of the capitalist class.

One set of union men will not stand by and see the throats of their brethren cut, unable to help without violating the sanctity of some alleged contract.

Nor will the capitalists, through their labor lieutenants, be able to pit one union against another, engendering strife, promoting division, entailing defeat, and reducing all to impotency and contempt.

There will be but one union and that will embrace all the workers in the respective divisions of trade in which they are engaged and when there is a grievance it will be that of the whole, and when there is a strike it will be that of all, and there will be no separate union jurisdictions to wrangle about, no neutrality to observe, no sympathetic strike to follow, to contract to violate, and no union leaders to be tampered with; and then the capitalists, through their "authorities," may appeal to their courts and march in their soldiers to operate their establishments.

The new union will express the now existing economic conditions. The machinery of production has become a vast mechanism, the trades have been merged, and the workers now constitute one great cooperative industrial army. Following this the capitalist owners of this machinery are combining and presenting a solid phalanx to their exploited wage-workers with the avowed purpose of keeping them in industrial slavery.

In the presence of this concentration of capital and combination of capitalists is it not ignorant defiance of the evolution of industry and foolish waste of time and substance to maintain trade isolation with nothing stronger than threads of expediency to bind the numberless unions in federation?

Can this properly be called unionism?

Is it not rather non-unionism?

The time has come for a new, up-to-date, all-embracing and revolutionary economic movement of the working class, the form and functions of which must express the present stage of industrial development.

This union will repudiate all alleged identity of interests between capitalists and workers. It will be organized to combat and not to conciliate the exploiters of the working class.

Between capitalists and wage-slaves there can be no peace. The war of these classes is on and to the end.

The Industrial Union will recognize and express in economic terms the class struggle, which even President Roosevelt inferentially admits in his oft-repeated deprecation of class hatred.

That society has been divided into two hostile economic classes and that they are at war with each other is inherent in the capitalist system itself, and not due to any mischievous agitation of the wanton demagogue, as the capitalist press would have deluded wage-slaves think. The capitalist are fighting for their lives. There can be no compromise that is more than temporary and no peace for the working class except at the price of slavery.

The National Civic Federation may for a time delude the workers; its thrifty promoters, including its plutocratic prelates, may staunch the wounds and salve the sores of the working class, but they can not prevent other and more serious ones from being inflicted.

The capitalist press has already made haste to report that this industrial movement was initiated by the Socialist Party to disrupt the trade union movement. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Socialist Party,

as a party, has absolutely nothing to do with it, and those of its members who are participants are so on their own individual account, and they, and they alone, are responsible, and quite willing to be, for their actions.

In the new union the workers in a great mill or other modern industry, whatever it may be, will not be parceled out among a hundred or more pigmy unions, with more or less rivalry, born of encroaching jurisdictions, and not infrequently controlled by petty politicians, then henchmen of the capitalists behind the scenes, and thus easily arrayed against each other in fratricidal conflict.

There has been enough, and more than enough of this kind of so-called unionism, and it is high time that the workers, so often defeated and scattered, blacklisted and persecuted, enjoined and imprisoned, exiled and starved, opened their eyes to the fact that they have been walking blindly into the traps set by their masters and their mercenaries, who have thwarted every design to efficiently unite the workers and who will now in concert warn the working class against the new union, seek to misrepresent its mission and discredit its promoters, but there is a vast body of class-conscious workers who will not be deceived and who will rally to the standard of the United Workers all the more resolutely because of the hostility, open and covert, of capitalist and alleged unionist, and of all the myriad foes of sound working class unionism.

With the workers united into one great economic body they can be trained and fitted to assume control of the respective industries in which they are engaged, so that when they are turned over to them, as they will be, with the conquest of the public powers through the political party of their class, they will be prepared to operate them free from capitalist domination and in accordance with the principles and program of industrial democracy and the Working Class Republic.

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