
TWENTY YEARS OF COMMUNIST TRADE UNION POLICY

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EVER since our Party was formed twenty years ago, the Communists in the trade unions have carried on an indefatigable struggle to build the labor movement into a powerful and progressive instrument in the hands of the working class. During the whole period the Communists have been in the front line of every struggle for better wages, shorter hours, improved working conditions and against the speed-up; they have fought for industrial unionism, trade union democracy, the organization of the unorganized, national and international trade union unity, and a progressive trade union leadership; they have worked tirelessly for the organization of women, youth, Negroes, and foreign born; and they have struggled against bureaucracy, incompetency, racketeering, gangsterism and every form of corruption and reaction in the unions. The Communist trade unionists have carried on a resolute fight for the rights of the Negro people; against imperialist exploitation in Latin America; for the recognition of the Soviet Union by the United States government; for the defense of Tom Mooney, the Scottsboro boys and J. B. McNamara; for unemployment, old age, accident and sickness insurance; and for many other political demands of the masses.

They have stood in the van in the struggle against fascism and for peace. Communist trade unionists have always carried on a policy of class struggle, fighting ceaselessly against capitalist illusions among the masses and against the class collaboration policies of reactionary labor leaders, urging alliances with other progressive forces, popularizing the lessons of the great October Revolution, developing the class consciousness of the workers, helping to educate and lead the masses in organized political action, and propagandizing for the principles of socialism.

This Communist trade union program has varied and grown with the changing economic and political situations and with the developing consciousness and organization of the masses. Its successful application in the class struggle, under conditions of the deepening general crisis of capitalism, has necessitated Leninist flexibility and a constant evolution of tactics and methods. Communist trade union policy may be roughly divided into three general phases, namely; those of the Harding-Coolidge post-War period (1921-29), the Hoover crisis period (1929-33), and the Roosevelt New Deal period.

At its birth in 1919 the Communist Party inherited the dual union policy

that had long characterized the revolutionary wing of the Socialist Party and other Left movements. This dual unionism, which persisted for a full generation, had led to the formation of many independent general industrial organizations, such as the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance (1895), the Industrial Workers of the World (1905), the Workers International Industrial Union (1908), and a score of other individual unions. Its general effect was to separate the revolutionary and most progressive workers from the masses in the conservative unions and to isolate them in small, sectarian unions. This, of course, played into the hands of the Gompers bureaucracy which dominated the broad labor movement.

The Communist Party was in existence only a year or so when it came to understand the folly of the dual unionism which had afflicted the American revolutionary movement for so many years. In this clarification process a big role was played by Lenin's famous pamphlet, "*Left-Wing*" *Communism: An Infantile Disorder*, which was directed against similar ultra-Leftist errors in many countries. Consequently, in 1921, the Party, condemning dual unionism, decided upon a policy of helping build and develop along progressive lines the conservative A. F. of L. and railroad unions. To carry this line into effect the Party gave its active support to the Trade Union Educational League, the already existing organization of militants within the old unions.

THE HARDING-COOLIDGE PERIOD

The T.U.E.L. was born in Chicago

in November, 1920, as successor to the Syndicalist League of North America (1912-14) and the International Trade Union Educational League (1915-17). The United States at the time, on the eve of the Harding-Coolidge regime, was in the midst of the greatest series of strike struggles in all its history. During the war the workers had greatly strengthened the trade unions, pushing their frontiers into many hitherto open-shop industries: meat-packing, steel, lumber, ship-building, heavy metal, etc. Hence, the A. F. of L. in 1919 reached 4,160,348 members, the highest figure it has ever attained. The workers also had boosted wages and widely established the eight-hour day. The employers, to check the wave of war-time organization and to retard the rise of progressive tendencies in the labor movement, initiated a big growth of company unionism, tied the trade union leaders up with class-peace support of the war, and busily sowed illusions among the masses to the effect that after the war a beneficent era of cooperation between capital and labor would be instituted.

Hardly had the war ended and the country sunk into the first post-war industrial crisis, however, than the employers, repudiating their rosy war-time promises to labor, assailed the trade unions in a bitter wage-slashing, union-smashing offensive. The strikes, marked with violent attacks by the employers and the use of troops against the workers by the Harding-Coolidge governments, raged from 1919 to 1923, in nearly every principal industry—steel, meat-packing, marine transport, automobile, coal, textile, clothing, railroads, building, printing, and others. U.S. Department

of Labor figures show that no less than 8,335,191 workers participated in these historic strikes. The conservative and reactionary leaders of the A. F. of L. and railroad unions retreated before the fierce employers' offensive. Drugged by war-time class collaborationism, saturated with corruption, and handicapped by obsolete craft unionism, they permitted the bravely fighting workers to suffer defeat upon defeat and led them into one surrender after another. The trade unions in meat-packing, lumber and steel were completely destroyed and those in many other industries were seriously weakened. Altogether the unions suffered the greatest defeat in their history; the A. F. of L. lost about 1,000,000 members and a general worsening of conditions for the workers occurred everywhere.

The newly-formed Communist Party, struggling to establish itself in the face of severe police persecution, was able to play a serious role in the latter part of the memorable 1919-23 strike movement. In the unions it also became the political leader of the struggle against Gompersism, a position once held but long since abandoned by the Socialist Party. The Party gave active support to the T.U.E.L. By the middle of 1922 the T.U.E.L. had become a real factor in the great battle of the workers to save their unions and wage standards. Its fighting program centered around three main slogans: Amalgamation, labor party and recognition of Soviet Russia, slogans which corresponded to the most urgent and immediate requirements of the workers.

The amalgamation (industrial union) slogan expressed the burning need of the workers for greater soli-

arity and a more militant leadership in the current great strikes; the labor party slogan was in response to the workers' necessity for united political action against the hostile Coolidge government, and the slogan for recognition of Soviet Russia reflected the deep influence the great Socialist Revolution in Russia was having upon the American working class.

These three main T.U.E.L. slogans, which the Party actively supported (there were also other slogans for organizing the unorganized, against imperialism, for Negro rights, for unemployment insurance, for defense of political prisoners, for world trade union unity, etc.), were a clear call to solidarity and action in the midst of the prevalent bitter struggle, which was being so badly led by the trade union bureaucracy. The workers rallied to the T.U.E.L. in great numbers and it began to exercise real mass influence in many strikes, especially in the national 1922 coal strike, when its efforts prevented the traitor Farrington from breaking the strike by making a separate agreement for the miners of Illinois. The T.U.E.L. was an important factor in the big Chicago building trades strike and also in the national strike of 400,000 railroad shopmen during the same year, when its broad amalgamation campaign, endorsed by a large majority of all the organized railroaders, had a markedly stiffening effect upon the workers' ranks. In the big needle trades' strikes and various other struggles of the period the Party forces also played an important part.

By 1923, when the Coolidge industrial boom was already well under way, the T.U.E.L., actively backed by the Party, succeeded in making its

three major slogans central issues in the labor movement and thereby gravely embarrassed the Gompers bureaucracy. The amalgamation movement, officially sponsored by the Chicago Federation of Labor, the T.U.E.L.'s principal stronghold, ran like wildfire among the organized workers. Soon nine international unions, seventeen of the largest state federations of labor, scores of central labor unions, and thousands of local unions—by computation more than half of the total trade union membership in the United States and Canada—endorsed the T.U.E.L. amalgamation, or industrial union resolution. The labor party campaign, in which the Party played openly a big role in alliance with the Chicago Federation of Labor, also struck root far and wide among the unions. It was indorsed by many hundreds of thousands of workers and became an important factor in creating the mass sentiment that resulted soon afterward in the independent presidential candidacy of La-Follette in 1924, when he polled 4,826,382 votes. The movement for recognition of Soviet Russia likewise received wide endorsement in the trade unions. Indeed, we calculated that the majority of the delegates at the Portland, 1923, convention of the A. F. of L., represented organizations that had endorsed Soviet recognition, although the labor bureaucrats, who dominated the convention, ignoring the mandate of their membership even as they did in the case of amalgamation and the labor party, voted down the recognition resolution.

As we have already seen, organized labor suffered a very serious setback in the great 1919-23 strikes. The weak, newly-organized Communist

Party was not able to crystallize its broad mass influence and to overcome the retreat policy of the Gompers bureaucracy, in which the already decaying Socialist Party participated. The weakened trade union movement, as the Coolidge prosperity boom developed in the 'twenties, sank into a morass of class collaboration, outstanding features of which were organized cooperation with the employers to speed up production, a big growth of labor banking and employee-stock buying, widespread persecution and expulsion of Left wingers from the unions, suppression of trade union democracy, adoption of no-strike policies, euphoniouly called the "New Wage policy" and the "Higher Strategy of Labor," and an unparalleled spreading of capitalist illusions among the workers by many of their official union leaders. The general consequence of all this was that the morale of the organized workers fell to a very low level, the unions lost heavily in militancy, their strategic positions in industry were seriously narrowed down, and for the first time in their history they did not increase their membership during a period of industrial upswing. All these factors together tended to cut down the mass influence of the T.U.E.L., as well as to weaken the position of the Party.

In the "prosperity" years following the huge 1919-23 strike wave, the T.U.E.L., although suffering much isolation from the masses, nevertheless led a number of very important mass union struggles. Among them was the fight against the B. & O. no-strike plan in the Machinists Union, culminating in the 1925 union elections in which the official returns

(obviously falsified) gave Johnston 18,021 and Anderson (progressive candidate) 17,076. In the Carpenters Union election of 1925, the T.U.E.L. candidate was officially credited with 9,014 votes against 77,985 for Hutcheson. Then there was the several-years-long T.U.E.L. fight against the coal operators and certain conservative influences in the Miners Union. In 1924, the T.U.E.L. candidate, G. Voyzey, a Communist, polled 66,000 votes—or one-third of the total cast—in the United Mine Workers of America elections. Then came the Save-the-Union movement of 1926-28, during which John Brophy, the progressive candidate in the union elections, polled 60,661 votes. And eventually there was the holding of the big rank-and-file miners' convention in Pittsburgh on April 1, 1928 (during the great 1927-28 coal strike), at which the 101,000 workers represented were definitely following T.U.E.L. leadership. During this period there were also several big struggles in the needle trades where at least 100,000 workers were supporting the T.U.E.L. program, including such important strikes as those of the 35,000 cloakmakers and 12,000 furriers in New York in 1926. In the textile industry also the T.U.E.L. led a number of important mass movements, among which were the hard-fought Passaic strike of 16,000 workers in 1926, the famous Gastonia strike of 1929, and an active participation in the strike of 25,000 New Bedford workers in 1928. There were various additional T.U.E.L. mass struggles of lesser importance in other industries during the latter 'twenties.

Communist trade union work in the whole T.U.E.L. period naturally

suffered from the fact that the Party membership in those years averaged only about 10,000, of which hardly more than one-third were trade union members. Then there was the fierce inner-Party factional fight which raged from 1923 to 1929 and which crippled all the mass activities of the Party. To numerical weakness and factionalism was added the further serious handicap of sectarianism. The Party, although it had eliminated dual unionism, anti-parliamentarianism and other sectarian tendencies shortly after its foundation, had not succeeded in wiping out altogether the sectarian evil. Sectarianism especially manifested itself strongly in the latter part of the T.U.E.L.'s life by tendencies, through the adoption of ultra-revolutionary programs, etc., to accept and rationalize the relative isolation from the masses forced upon the T.U.E.L. during the Coolidge boom, the drift of the trade union leadership to the Right, the growth of gangsterism in the unions, the decline of trade union democracy, and the wholesale expulsions and persecutions then being experienced by Communists in the labor movement.

The T.U.E.L. at its foundation had the generally correct policy of a united front between the Left and progressive forces, and all its successful mass struggles were conducted on this basis. Sectarian tendencies, however, plus the trend of the progressives towards class collaborationism during the Coolidge boom, operated to undermine this sound united front policy and to drive a wedge between the Communists and the progressives. This naturally weakened the Party's and the T.U.E.L.'s connections with the masses. Especially did

such isolation take place as a result of the ill-fated split with the Fitzpatrick forces at the Labor Party convention in Chicago in July, 1923. Towards the end of its life the T.U.E.L., so far as its actual membership was concerned, became pretty much a body of Left militants.

The T.U.E.L. was a minority opposition movement and its structural form was the organized non-dues-paying group of Lefts and progressives in the respective unions. Considering the state of the trade unions and their leadership at the time, this was, in general, a correct and historically justified type of organization. Its main weakness was, as already indicated, sectarian tendencies to narrow the movement down by the adoption of Leftist programs.

The T.U.E.L., especially in its first years, played an important role in the American labor movement. Notwithstanding the numerical and other weaknesses, the T.U.E.L. led many big strikes and other mass movements. It was through its struggles that American Communists got their initial mass experience in the class struggle and first made their influence felt in the labor movement. As such, this period occupies a very important position in our Party's history.

THE HOOVER CRISIS PERIOD

During the Hoover regime the Communist Party trade union policy expressed itself mainly through support of the Trade Union Unity League. The T.U.U.L. was based upon the formation of independent industrial unions, although it also cultivated Left-progressive groups of the old T.U.E.L. type within the A. F. of L. and railroad unions. The

first of the new industrial unions took shape during 1928; but the T.U.U.L. proper was not founded until September 1, 1929, when, in Cleveland, it was established by a reorganization of the T.U.E.L. at the latter's fourth national conference. The Trade Union Unity League, with its main stress upon independent industrial unionism in contrast to the minority opposition group that was the form of the T.U.E.L., represented an important development in Communist trade union policy.

A number of interrelated factors led to the formation of the T.U.U.L. just a few months before the coming of the October, 1929, crisis. First, the A. F. of L. unions, by defeats and conservative policies, had greatly narrowed down their industrial base since the war time, notably in steel, meat-packing, auto, lumber and marine transport, thus leaving vast sections of formerly organized industry practically without any unions. Secondly, the trade union leadership, saturated with the B. & O. plan no-strike policies of the period, paralyzed the action of the craft unions and made them almost powerless to defend the interests of the organized workers. Thirdly, large numbers of Left and progressive workers who opposed the no-strike policy had been expelled from the old unions, including 50,000 New York cloakmakers, dressmakers and furriers. Fourthly, the unorganized workers in many places were calling for unionization, a demand that the old unions did not satisfy.

These several factors combined to provide a basis for the independent unionism of the T.U.U.L. in various industries, even prior to the actual economic crisis. This was especially

true in industries where the open shop reigned supreme and the workers were totally unorganized, as in the auto, steel, electrical manufacturing and lumber industries. In the coal industry also there was a place for the T.U.U.L. because of the almost complete smashup of the U.M.W.A. in the bituminous regions during the 1927-28 strike; the U.T.W. in the textile industry covered only a small fraction of the workers and left a field for independent unionism; likewise the needle trades provided a basis for independent unionism because of the mass expulsions of Left and progressive workers that had taken place there. Coal, textile and clothing were sick industries, with a serious unemployment which forecast the eventual general economic crisis which paralyzed all industry in 1929. When the great crisis finally descended upon the country a few months after the T.U.U.L. was formed the natural base of the latter was further extended by the urgent need of the workers for an active defense of the wage-and-hour standards and the inability and unwillingness of the A. F. of L. officialdom to give these masses militant leadership.

Although the policy of independent industrial unionism thus had a legitimate base among the vast masses of the unorganized, the prevalent sectarianism seriously distorted the T.U.U.L. by extending the independent unions into industries where the old unions were strong, by making the T.U.U.L. union programs too Left, by confining the T.U.U.L. union leadership largely to Communists, and by seriously neglecting progressive work within the A. F. of L. These negative tendencies crippled

the activities of the T.U.U.L. and handicapped its growth.

The principal T.U.U.L. unions were those in the mining, textile, needle, automobile, steel, marine, agriculture, food, and shoe industries. There were also smaller organizations in the tobacco, lumber, furniture, jewelry, and other industries. At its maximum strength, early in 1934, the T.U.U.L. reached a membership of 125,000, exclusive of the approximately 150,000 members in the affiliated National Unemployed Council. The strongest local central body of the T.U.U.L., in New York City, had 65,000 members at its peak. The T.U.U.L., like its predecessor, the T.U.E.L., maintained fraternal relations with the militant labor unions of other countries through the Red International of Labor Unions.

During the five years of its existence the T.U.U.L. conducted many strikes and other struggles. In mining there were the fierce 1931 strikes of the National Miners Union in Western Pennsylvania with 42,000 workers, and Kentucky with 10,000. In the textile industry during 1929-31, there were many small strikes of the National Textile Workers Union in New England, involving about 50,000 workers, besides the Lawrence strike of 23,500 in October, 1931. In the needle trades the Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union also conducted numerous strikes, involving scores of thousands of workers. In the auto industry the Auto Workers Union led several struggles, the most important of which were the three Detroit strikes in 1933, amounting in all to 16,000 workers. In steel the Steel and Metal Workers Industrial Union led the fiercely-fought Am-

bridge strike of 5,000 workers in 1933. In agriculture the T.U.U.L. union headed several of the biggest strikes ever known in this industry, including those of 18,000 Colorado beet workers in 1932, and 18,000 cotton pickers and 6,000 grape pickers in California in 1933. Other important T.U.U.L. strikes were in the shoe, tobacco and marine industries, many of them successful. During 1933 the total number of T.U.U.L. strikers was 250,000. This figure does not take into account the large number of A. F. of L. strikers who were under the influence of the Communists.

Besides these strike activities, the T.U.U.L., with which the National Unemployed Council was affiliated, played a very important role in the great unemployed struggles during the years 1930-33. These movements of the unemployed took the forms of hundreds of local, state and national mass parades, demonstrations and hunger marches, around demands for government unemployment relief and insurance. The national demonstration of March 6, 1930, turned out 1,250,000 unemployed on the streets in the principal industrial centers of the country, including 110,000 in New York and 100,000 in Detroit. The great unemployed movement of these years of the deep crisis, the biggest mass struggle ever led directly by Communists in this country, was a powerful factor in procuring relief and work for the starving unemployed and in making the question of unemployment insurance a burning political issue. It also sank our Party's roots deep among the masses.

The Communist Party, the Y.C.L., the T.U.U.L., and the National Unemployed Council, during this pe-

riod of militant struggle, faced heavy persecution and police brutality. Union offices were raided, members were blacklisted, and leaders were arrested and deported. Pickets were slugged, gassed and jailed. In several states T.U.U.L. unions were declared illegal. From September, 1929, to March, 1933, according to Labor Research Association figures, 23 workers were killed in T.U.U.L. strikes and unemployed struggles. The A. F. of L. leaders and old-guard Socialists condoned these brutal attacks upon the Communists and other militants that were made by the reactionary employers and Hoover government.

Notwithstanding its weaknesses, the T.U.U.L. exercised a considerable and constructive influence upon the labor movement in its time. Its militant educational campaigns, strikes and unemployed struggles deeply stirred the harassed masses who had been paralyzed by the A. F. of L. leaders' collaboration, anti-militant policies. Historically, the many T.U.U.L. strikes in coal, steel and textile during 1930-32, and especially its three big strikes in the auto, coal and shoe industries early in 1933, were direct forerunners and stimulators of the great strike wave that got under way in the latter part of 1933, which has lasted with varying tempo ever since, and an important product of which is the industrial unionism of the C.I.O.

The vast strike upheaval of the masses which began in 1933 rapidly changed the conditions in the trade union movement that previously had made necessary the independent unionism of the T.U.U.L. In the great struggle the fighting masses broke down the no-strike policy of

the A. F. of L., infused the unions with a new spirit of democracy and put a stop to the expulsion campaigns of the bureaucrats and the progressive elements. The unions started to do considerable organization work in the industries, and a large section of the leadership began to develop a progressive spirit. In short, the mass struggle gave fresh life to the whole trade union movement.

Quickly sensing the significance of this renaissance in the trade unions, and in order to strengthen this unity of labor, the Communists, together with other progressive forces, worked to bring the T.U.U.L.'s independent unions into the A. F. of L. The T.U.U.L. began in 1933 to merge its unions with the corresponding A. F. of L. organizations, and by March 17, 1935, this process had proceeded so far that, by formal resolution, the T.U.U.L. liquidated itself as a national body.

THE ROOSEVELT NEW DEAL PERIOD

In the six and one-half years of the New Deal the workers of this country have made substantial progress, both organizationally and ideologically. In the 1932 and 1936 Presidential elections, jointly with the farmers and lower middle class elements, they administered resounding defeats to the capitalist forces of reaction; they have in strikes and organizing campaigns extended widely the frontiers of trade unionism and recruited their organized forces up to some 8,000,000 members; they have achieved at least the beginnings of a program of social legislation; they are developing cooperative relations with the farmers and lower middle class; and in har-

mony with the tendency of the masses internationally, they are moving gradually towards the creation of a great democratic front of all the toiling people against fascist-minded reaction.

The chief expression of trade union progress during the Roosevelt regime is the C.I.O. with its progressive leadership, industrial unionism, active organization campaigns, militant strikes, and intelligent attitudes towards the Negro, youth, social insurance, world labor unity, etc. But the A. F. of L. unions also, despite the reactionary holdback Green-Woll-Hutcheson leadership, have achieved considerable progress during the same period, although in lesser measure and at a slower pace. This progress is evidenced by the greater politicalization of their programs, the abandonment of their no-strike policy, the expansion of trade union democracy, the accomplishment of considerable organizing work, the gradual growth of a younger and more progressive-minded leadership, and the development of a broader international outlook. The danger in the situation, however, arises from the fact that the resistance of the A. F. of L. leadership to the new spirit of progress among the workers has led to an open rupture in the trade union movement.

The recent advance of the trade unions, amounting to a virtual renaissance, has been accomplished by unprecedented economic and political struggles. In these the Communists have played a vital and increasing role. The Communist Party, with its Marxist-Leninist training, has ceaselessly explained to the masses the fundamental meaning of the whole struggle and has clearly placed the

central issue—democracy versus fascism. In the 1936 Presidential elections our Party, with Comrades Browder and Ford as its spokesmen, threw its entire force into the struggle against the reactionary policies of Landon and the demagogy of Lemke. In all the important A. F. of L. and C.I.O. strikes of the New Deal period—the big coal strikes, the many auto strikes, the national textile strikes, the San Francisco general strike, and many others—Communists have actively supported the unions. Every proposed piece of progressive legislation, upon a city, state or national scale, found in the Communists militant supporters. Communist members of the unions have also been active participants in the great organizing campaigns of the C.I.O., in the steel, auto, textile and other industries, as well as in the lesser organizational work of the A. F. of L. Our Party fought tirelessly to prevent Green and Co. from splitting the labor movement and now it works actively to restore trade union unity. In every important union Communists will be found championing cooperative action between the A. F. of L. and C.I.O. in defense of their immediate economic and political interests, as preliminary steps to actual unity. The Communists have constantly exposed the Trotskyite-Lovestoneite traitors and cooperated with the progressive labor forces to preserve the C.I.O. unions from splits. The Communist Parties in the many countries of North, Central and South America are real factors in promoting hemisphere solidarity of the trade union movement. Our Party, jointly with the Communists in other lands, are militant advocates of world trade

union unity by the inclusion of Soviet trade unions into the Amsterdam International. Our Party is also the clearest-sighted advocate of peace through a policy of collective security; the most expert in exposing to the workers every brand of fascist demagogy. It has fought resolutely to combine the workers, farmers and lower middle class into a great democratic front. And ceaselessly it has continued its propaganda among the masses on the necessity of socialism to supersede decaying capitalism.

In the New Deal period, with all its struggles and labor progress, Communist trade union work, successfully struggling against traditional Leftist sectarian tendencies, has naturally taken on new forms and methods. These differ widely from those used in the days of the T.U.E.L. and T.U.U.L. Thus, the general political program of the Party, placing squarely the issue of democracy versus fascism, corrects the sectarian tendencies in the past to underestimate the immediate needs of the masses as the issues of struggle. The Party has also especially made progress in the utilization of American democratic traditions and in linking up the struggle to preserve and extend democracy with the fight to establish socialism, which constitute real advances over previous sectarian attitudes on these matters.

Communist trade unionists, far more than in either the T.U.E.L. or T.U.U.L. stages, now work upon the basis of a broad united front of all progressive elements; including the Catholic strata in the unions. The new spirit of progress in evidence among the workers and also among large numbers of trade union leaders

in the A. F. of L. and C.I.O., makes such a united front policy both practical and imperative. In innumerable union situations in both sections of the labor movement Communists and non-Communists, in the broad ranks and in the leadership, are working together in fruitful and effective cooperation. If Communist trade unions are to be found in active opposition to such officials as Green, Woll, Frey, Rickert, Wharton and Hutcheson, it is because a fight against the reactionary policies of these people is a fundamental necessity for even the most elementary progress of the labor movement.

The organizational forms of Communist trade union work have changed radically in the present period. Some methods, formerly correct, no longer correspond to the situation in the labor movement. Thus the Party members do not now participate in groupings or other organized activities within the unions. The Party also discountenances the formation of progressive groups, blocs and caucuses in unions; it has liquidated its own Communist fractions, discontinued its shop papers, and it is now modifying its system of industrial branches. Communists function in the trade unions solely through the regular committees and institutions of the movement. The Communists are the best fighters for democracy and discipline in the trade union movement and are resolutely opposed to all forms of group or clique control.

The general position of the Communists in the trade unions, as well as their organizational methods, has changed fundamentally in the present period, as compared with earlier

stages in the life of our Party. The Communists in the trade unions are no longer merely an opposition force, as they were in T.U.E.L. and T.U.U.L. years. Today, occupying many official posts in both A. F. of L. and C.I.O. unions and everywhere working in full cooperation with progressive leaders and rank and file, Communists share directly, although as yet usually in a minor measure, in the official responsibility of carrying on the movement. Communists as officers are participating in tasks of policy-making and administration in A. F. of L. and C.I.O. unions on a scale quite unknown in the periods of the T.U.E.L. and T.U.U.L., and they are helping to build the highest type of trade union leadership the American labor movement has yet known. This new leadership, based upon efficient service and democratic responsibility to the rank and file, has broken completely with the many autocratic and reactionary practices which have so long disgraced many sections of A. F. of L. officialdom.

During the past several years our Party and the Young Communist League have experienced considerable growth—both numerically and in mass leadership—while the stagnant little groups of Thomasites, Trotskyites and Lovestoneites hamper, obstruct and try to split labor's ranks. Our Party's growth reflects the general advance of the working class. The Party has become an organization of well over 100,000 strong, with its members realistically and effectively active in every type of mass organization. It has expanded into a serious factor in the American political life. The growth in size and influence of our Party is due in large

measure to its correct trade union policy, to its self-criticism, to its Leninist flexibility in adopting the immediate demands, forms of organization and methods of Communist trade union work necessary to meet the exigencies and possibilities of the situation. Of course, our Party in this general aspect still displays shortcomings and weaknesses, hangovers of a sectarian character, but they are steadily being overcome.

THE GREAT TASK BEFORE US

In the 1940 Presidential elections the forces of reaction and those of democracy will come to a heavy collision, the outcome of which will be fraught with profound political importance. The big business reactionaries, powerfully organizing their cohorts, are determined to destroy the mass organizations, social legislation, and civic rights won by the people under the Roosevelt regime and thus to open the road to fascism in this country. Victory for them in the elections would deal a heavy blow to popular freedom in the United States and also to peace and democracy throughout the world. By the same token, a victory for the forces supporting the New Deal, besides opening up new vistas of democracy in this country, would have far-reaching progressive effects on the world struggle against fascism and war.

The coming national elections will be the most important since the days of the Civil War, and they will constitute a milestone in the history of the United States. In order that the forces of democracy shall win this crucial election struggle there needs to be a broad democratic front of workers, farmers, professionals and

small business people built up. This alliance of the democratic strata of the people, the bulk of our nation, can and must be united around an effective program for national and social security; for jobs, democracy and peace. Necessarily, the organized workers should form the backbone of this great democratic front.

The split between the A. F. of L. and C.I.O., caused originally and continued since by the A. F. of L. reactionaries, constitutes the gravest menace to the vitally essential solidarity of the democratic forces in the elections. Unless it is overcome, it may well be the cause of throwing the elections to the Republican reactionaries. The split not only confuses and divides the ranks of labor, but it also antagonizes the farmers and alienates otherwise friendly middle class elements. The split is, therefore, not simply a trade union question, but a political issue of decisive importance. To avoid a major disaster to democracy in this country, the split must be either completely ended or at least practical political cooperation established between the membership and organizations of the two labor bodies, within the coming pre-election months.

Unquestionably the overwhelming masses of organized labor and of the progressive forces generally throughout the country favor the settlement of the split on a basis which will guarantee the existence and growth of the new C.I.O. unions in the mass production industries, the strengthening of unions in all crafts and trades, and provides a basis for a united political stand against the common enemy. Roosevelt in his unity efforts reflects the desires of the great ma-

majority of New Dealers in the Democratic Party; Lewis speaks for the solid unity sentiment of the entire C.I.O.; Tobin expresses the unity will of a big majority of A. F. of L. members, and Whitney undoubtedly does the same for the bulk of railroad unionists. The great weakness is, however, that the unity forces in the A. F. of L. do not assert themselves sufficiently, while Roosevelt, Lewis, Tobin and Whitney are not unitedly pulling together. This situation enables a comparative handful of well-entrenched A. F. of L. reactionaries to keep labor divided. There can be no doubt that Green, Woll, Hutcheson and other autocrats in the A. F. of L. Executive Council, by continuing the suicidal split, are attempting to swing the 1940 elections to the Republicans. It is high time, therefore, that the New Deal forces generally—in the Democratic Party, in the A. F. of L., in the C.I.O., in the railroad unions, in the farmers' organizations—get together and, in the name of the preservation of democracy in this country, put an end to the criminal split in labor's ranks by bringing the pressure of the overwhelming majority of the workers and other progressive strata against the reactionaries in the A. F. of L. Executive Council. The fight for trade union unity has become a decisive phase of the fight to defeat the Republican Party and fascist-minded reaction in 1940.

In supporting this all-important struggle for labor unity the Communist trade unionists find their present central task. For twenty years our Party has been educating its trade union members in trade union democracy, in the Marxian principles and tactics of the class struggle and

in devotion and loyalty to the working class, and now, in the crucial struggle to heal the breach in labor's ranks, their mettle is being tested. It is the great duty of all Communists to explain to the workers the deadly political danger of the split, the need of overcoming the opposition of A. F. of L. reactionaries, the imperative need to heal the split in order to assure victory in the 1940 elections, and the practical channels along which the unification process can proceed.

By winning the A. F. of L. and C.I.O. unions for parallel policies, by cultivating cooperative actions between A. F. of L. and C.I.O. unions in defense of labor's legislative interests, locally, state-wide and nationally, by encouraging non-working class New Dealers to raise their voices for labor unity, by lending all possible support to the newly-established C.I.O. unions—the Communists can help defeat the splitting policies of the A. F. of L. Executive Council and assist greatly in healing the split in the trade union movement. Our Party is united, strong, healthy and growing. It is now a real factor in the fight for trade union unity and it must become even more so. The achievement of trade union unity, or at least of political cooperation between the C.I.O. and the great body of the A. F. of L. around immediate issues of struggle and in the 1940 elections, would give the labor movement the greatest forward push it has ever known. To help in accomplishing this historic task all Communists can wholeheartedly dedicate themselves while celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the Communist Party.