

gain a foothold in the Party, and also a guarantee against opportunism of the Lore type, is the raising of the theoretical level of the Party. The work of educating the membership of the Party in Marxism and Leninism therefore becomes a vital part of the work of Bolshevization. The National Convention has adopted a program for this work and the Central Executive Committee has already established an Agitprop department so that this work will be given systematic attention in the future.

The reorganization of our Party on the basis of shop nuclei and street nuclei (international branches) is for the Party the greatest immediate transformation in the work of Bolshevization. We cannot become a Bolshevik Party as long as our Party is decentralized into eighteen language groups and exists in the form of language and territorial branches. The reorganization on the basis of shop nuclei is the basis of our becoming a mass Party.

The existing Party organization belongs to the past. It was a Party organization existing outside of the working class in place of inside as part of it. The new Party organization will create the organ for carrying out our program for work among the masses. The reorganization is the *sine qua non* without which we cannot make even the first step toward the Bolshevization of the Party. With the reorganization, a new Party will come into existence—a Party in

close contact with the workers in the factories through its shop nuclei, a Party with its fractions in every trade union and benefit society and co-operative—in a word, a Party that is so deeply embedded among the workers and the organizations of the workers that there is no power which can separate it from the working masses and prevent its influence and leadership from growing powerful among these masses.

Thus, through these actions of the Fourth Convention, there has opened the new phase of Party development, the period of Bolshevization. Our Party stands before tremendous tasks and great opportunities. In order that these tasks may be accomplished and to take advantage of the opportunities before it, the Party must be united for the work it has on hand.

The Party has a correct program of activity. It has a leadership which has the stamp of approval of the Communist International as being the group closest to the views of the Communist International in our Party. We must now through actual work, through actual struggle, make our program a reality. The immediate future requires of every member of the Party greater sacrifice, greater service to the Party than ever before in its history. We have achieved the correct program, our Party leadership has shown in the past that it can put our program into action. Now the Party must work.

## The Left Wing Railroad Conference

By William Z. Foster

ON September 13 and 14 the International Committee for Amalgamation in the Railroad Industry held its second international conference in Chicago.

What a different picture this gathering presented of railroad trade unionism than the first conference! The first conference was held on December 9 and 10, 1922. The unions were then just in the midst of the greatest economic struggle in the history of American railroad trade unionism. During the war the unions had deeply entrenched themselves, and the Shopmen's strike then going on was one tragic act in the employers' great drive against the railroad workers. The 1922 left-wing railroad conference, made up of 425 delegates, vibrated with the spirit of the great struggle then going on. With thrilling acclaim, it seized upon the program of amalgamation and the complete solidarity of all railroad workers as pointing the broad and evident way to victory.

The 1925 conference, just held, met under altogether different circumstances. It occurred in the midst of the wreckage after the great lost battle. With only a fraction as many delegates (60, all told, from various points throughout the United States and Canada) it confronted a vista of demolished unions, a demoralized rank and file, and a union leadership totally incapable of meeting the deep-going crises now affecting the railroad trade unions.

In his report Secretary Otto Wangerin painted a vivid picture of the rapid growth of the unions during the war period, the development of the national agreement covering all 16 unions, the accompanying large increases in wages,

the establishment of the eight-hour day, the bitter attack by the companies on the unions after the close of the war, the failure of the unions to meet this attack unitedly, the treachery and incompetence of the union leaders, the wholesale wage cuts, the loss of the great national Shopmen's strike, the attendant devastation of the unions, the leaders' complete repudiation of the saving program of amalgamation and militant struggle, and then surrender to the companies by way of the "B. & O. plan" and various other schemes of class collaboration.

Secretary Wangerin also showed that of the 400,000 shop workers that were in the unions prior to the 1922 strike, not more than 100,000 remain at the present time. The Railway Carmen lost 150,000 members, the Machinists 75,000, and other striking unions accordingly. Moreover, other unions that did not strike were disastrously weakened by the general demoralization attendant upon the great defeat. The Railway Clerks lost 100,000 members, and the Maintenance of Way men 150,000. The total union membership of the 16 crafts fell from 1,300,000 in 1922 to about 700,000 at the present time.

Added to the heavy loss in membership is the great weakening in the fighting spirit of the unions. They have become saturated with class collaborationism. Including the railroad unions in his criticism, Secretary Wangerin said, "The present-day characteristics of a great number of the unions that make up the American trade union movement are apathy, indifference, acquiescence in the 'open shop,' or American Plan, absence of a working class outlook, and

no sign of militancy or courage to grapple with the great problems confronting them."

The reading of Secretary Wangerin's report immediately brought forth the fact that a number of reactionaries, mostly officials of the unions, had hied themselves to the conference under the guise of being supporters of amalgamation. The first of these reactionaries to give voice was Corbett, chairman of the Railway Carmen on a Canadian road that had voted for amalgamation. He took flat issue with Wangerin. He declared that after all the unions were all right, the railroad workers were better off than other workers, the membership losses were exaggerated, the leaders of the left wing were criticizing the union officials too much, the value of amalgamation should not be exaggerated, and other stuff of the same kind. This "amalgamationist" was given such a warm reception by the left-wing that shortly he disappeared from the conference.

A second phase of the attack against making the amalgamation movement a vital force among railroad workers manifested itself in a determined effort to limit the program of the international committee simply to the advocacy of amalgamation. This tendency was also decisively defeated, and the conference proceeded to adopt a whole left-wing program, including resolutions for a joint campaign of all railroad unions to organize the unorganized, a general wage demand for all railroad workers, the labor party, amalgamation of the sixteen railroad unions, active support of the anthracite strike by refusal to haul scab coal, recognition of Soviet Russia, nationalization of the railroads and mines, release of class war prisoners, world trade union unity, organization of the workers of auto-bus and electric lines and formation of a general federation of transport workers, state relief of unemployment, an immediate convention of the Railway Employees' Department to take the necessary measures to meet the present crisis of the railroad unions, for autonomy of the Canadian sections of the railroad unions, and against the "B. & O. plan," company unions, labor banking, racial discrimination, expulsion of militants from the unions, corruption in union elections, anti-syndicalism laws.

A sharp and instructive fight took place over the resolution condemning the "B. & O. plan." The debate made it clear that the idea of class collaboration, or "cooperation" as it is politely called, has made great inroads among railroad workers. There were a number of delegates present, genuinely progressive and fighters of long standing, who hesitated to take a stand against the "B. & O. plan," believing that it offers the only possible program for the unions in their present weakened state. The officials present representing system federations that had endorsed amalgamation, supported the "B. & O. plan" almost without exception. Against the arguments of these "cooperationists," the left wing of the conference levelled its heaviest guns, pointing out that the movement for the "B. & O. plan" is defeatist in character and follows a policy of surrender, that it is diametrically opposed to the militant amalgamation movement, and is sucking the very life's blood out of the railroad unions. For a time the conference threatened to split over this issue. The resolution condemning the "B. & O. plan" and similar "industrial peace" schemes, was finally adopted by a vote of 21 to 8, about half of the delegates having already

left for the conventions of the Carmen, Boilermakers, and Maintenance of Way men which were to begin next day in Kansas City and Detroit. The discussion showed the great need for an organized struggle against the "B. & O. plan" in the railroad trades.

The question of world trade union unity provoked another flurry of opposition. The more timid ones feared that the inclusion of it in the program of the international committee would develop a needless opposition to the amalgamation program, because of the connection of the Russian unions with the movement. But the conference went squarely on record to give the movement its heartiest support. The fact that the British unions were taking a leading part in the world unity movement gave it such an air of legitimacy that the fears of even the most timid were somewhat allayed.

Since its foundation in 1922, the international committee has done an important work among railroad workers. Its campaign for amalgamation has been far-reaching and effective. Several times it has circulated the 12,000 (formerly) local unions in the railroad industry. The great masses of the rank and file of the unions, except in the case of the four brotherhoods, have been won over to the idea of one union of all railroad workers, even though the reactionary officialdom has prevented the realization of this goal. This fact did much to check the demoralization after the strike. It gave the defeated workers a glimmer of hope. Amalgamation checked the break-up of the unions. In addition, large numbers of the unorganized masses on the railroads, who absolutely refuse to join the craft unions in their present isolated condition, aver that as soon as the unions make a move for consolidation they will join en masse. The actual amalgamation of the railroad unions would be the signal for the reorganization of large sections of the unorganized.

The international committee has also done other valuable work. It cleaned out the Grable gang from control of the Maintenance of Way union. It has carried on an open struggle against the insidious "B. & O. plan." It was an important factor in defeating Bill Lee's conference of July 29, called for the purpose of ending all strikes on the railroads by betraying the unions wholesale and stripping them of the right to strike. The power of the international committee will also be felt at the conventions of the Carmen, Boilermakers, and Maintenance of Way unions, which are being held as this article goes to press.

But the situation is extremely difficult. The unions on the railroads are badly weakened and their morale is low. The officialdom is hopelessly reactionary. The so-called progressives in the unions are spineless, visionless, and without any real program or organization. They are lost in the swamps of class collaboration, being the great champions of LaFolletteism on the political field, and of the "B. & O. plan" in the unions. Only the left-wing can see clearly the solution of even the simplest problems confronting the railroad workers. But it is weak, poorly organized, and subject to bitter persecution by the reactionary officialdom. The railroad amalgamation conference emphasized again the tremendous tasks confronting the left wing in the railroad industry. Upon its shoulders rests the burden of building and developing the unions and political organizations of the railroad workers from the very ground up.