

REVOLUTIONARY UNIONS AND INT'L WOMEN'S DAY

By WM. Z. FOSTER.

THE question of the organization and development of the struggle of women workers becomes more and more important with the deepening of the capitalist crisis. It has been one of the serious weaknesses of the TUUL not to have paid far greater attention to this vital task. International Women's Day on March 8th must mark a turning point in this respect and initiate real organization work of the revolutionary unions among the great army of women toilers.

The woman worker constantly plays a more important role in industry. Through the rationalization process, and through preparations for the capitalist war, increasingly large numbers of women are being brought into industry. This is true not only of light industry, but of heavy industry as well. During the years 1920-30 there has been an increase of 2,500,000 women workers, as compared with an increase of 500,000 from 1910 to 1920—during the World War period.

One of the principal aims of the employers in bringing such large masses of women into industry is to beat down wage standards, by compelling these unorganized women to work for lower rates even than the poverty wages paid to unorganized men workers. Since the beginning of the present crisis, the wages of women have gone down 30 to 40 per cent. There has also been a lengthening of their hours, increased speed-up. They have suffered acutely from unemployment—about 2,500,000 women workers are now jobless. They are the victims of poverty, and destitution in its worst forms. Of course, the Negro women workers suffer most acutely from all this exploitation and poverty. They are discriminated against in every way, and are forced to do the hardest work at lowest wages.

The experience, especially during the present crisis, shows clearly that the women will not accept these conditions unresistingly. All over the country they have shown a real fighting spirit in many of our strikes—in Lawrence, Paterson, New York dress strike, including the Pittsburgh and Kentucky strikes. They have been leaders in the fight for unemployment insurance, for local relief, against evictions and high cost of living. Take the cases of Clarina Michelson, Doris Parks, Ann Barton, Dorothy Ross, Julio Parker, Marguerite Fontaine in Kentucky.

The TUUL unions, especially textile, must take up far more seriously the question of organization of the women workers, giving special attention to the building of functioning women's departments, bringing forward women's demands, fighting against the dismissal of married women.

The percentage of women in the industrial unions is far too small. It does not reflect the growing number of women in basic industries and the degree of militancy and participation of women in the strikes and unemployment struggles led by the TUUL.

The March 8th campaign must be utilized everywhere for recruiting women into revolutionary unions. Attention should also be paid to drawing the women workers of AFL unions into the revolutionary minorities organized in these unions.

The March 8th demonstrations must be made real mass movements. Every TUUL union should mobilize its membership for full support and participation in the demonstrations. International Women's Day must be made a day of struggle against special exploitation of women, against imperialist war and in defense of the Chinese masses and the Soviet Union.