

The Garment Workers Struggle Enters An Organization Phase

By H. KORETZ

WITH the passing of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union convention held in Boston last May, all illusions about the possibility of reaching a settlement of the struggle between the right and left wings in the organization have been totally dispelled.

The convention manifested the complete bankruptcy of the right wing leadership, which through its methods of co-operation with the bosses and its wholesale expulsion policies is fully responsible for the complete destruction of the once powerful organizations of the cloak and dressmakers. It exposed the right wing's farce battle cry of "fighting the Communists" and made it clear to everybody that this treacherous clique, as is the case with all bureaucrats, will go to any lengths in giving concessions to the employers, but will not give in one iota to the thousands of union members whose interests they are claiming to represent.

The convention, instead of occupying itself with industrial problems concerning the welfare of the membership, was converted into a battlefield of the struggle for power between the two main cliques in the right wing machine: the Sigman clique on the one side and the Shlesinger clique on the other.

The main outstanding feature of this tragi-comedy called a convention was the hypocritical stand taken by the lieutenants of Shlesinger, Messrs Dubinsky and Ninfo, on the question of "election of general officers through a referendum". No sooner was there an agreement reached on the division of spoils, than this bunch gave up all pretence of "fight" for progressive measures.

Sigman's Destructiveness

Twenty-one months ago the Sigman clique, having united all possible opposition to the left wing leadership, took over control of the Cloakmakers' general strike, expelled the joint board, and following that, began to "re-organize" the most powerful locals of the international union, which were under the control of the left wing membership. In this war of extermination on the "left wing and the Communists" the right wing group following Sigman utilized every possible agency. They received the active support of the higher officialdom of the American Federation of Labor, the state government, the police, the courts, the yellow "Jewish Daily Forward," the socialist renegades, and most of all, the underworld.

The threatening danger of the "Red Peril" was so big that the right wing found it necessary to organize the "Special Committee for the Preservation of the Trade Unions," which operated on a national scale and had for its purposes, first, to collect financial assistance for the Sigman pogrom, and secondly, to circulate, among the trade unions "facts and figures," so-called, about the "invading enemy" (the rise of the left wing, militant union sentiment) so that "when and wherever it manifests itself, it will be fought vigorously and not permitted to develop."

Notwithstanding this enormous help they have secured in their struggle against the rank and file of the I.L.G.W.U., the pogrom clique today find themselves beaten, exhausted, demoralized, internally split, financially bankrupt, the union smashed, union conditions wiped out through right wing activity, struggling only to survive with the assistance they are getting from the bosses.

"Tolerance Group" Joins Left

The membership continues its determined opposition to the rule by force, and this is the most important factor responsible for the downfall of the pogrom clique. Thousands of members fell victims of the pogroms, were beaten and slugged, lost their jobs, or were sentenced to long terms in prison, but never did they submit to the corrupt and self imposed leadership of Sigman & Co.

The right wing is being eliminated as an important factor in the organization, and the central problem confronting the workers in the industry and the left wing leadership is that of rebuilding a union and re-establishing union conditions.

Pursuing all the time a policy of unity among the workers for the purpose of maintaining union standards against the extortions of the bosses, the Joint Board (left wing) has been able to attract not only those elements who have hitherto held aloof, but has split the right wing machine by getting over to the left wing side the "Tolerance Group" which was the most active of the Sigman following in the beginning of the fight.

The formation of the National Organization Committee at the Boston Conference of progressive delegates who were not admitted to Sigman's farce convention, was of historic importance. The National Organization Committee has adopted a program which is clear-cut and points the way out of the

present chaotic condition. From the application of this program a united organization is to emerge, formed on such a basis as to insure full control to the rank and file, to those who are the actual backbone of the organization, and for whom the organization exists.

With the union at present practically destroyed, and with the problem of right wing-left wing peace abolished, it is evident that the union can never again gain its former prestige with either Sigman or Shlesinger at its head. Those who destroyed most of it, those who converted whatever they could control of it into a company union, can not build it, can never secure the confidence of the masses.

The task of winning back control over the conditions in the garment industry is therefore the task of the left wing, which is the only organized constructive force in the union today. The National Organization Committee, which is a united front of all honest and sincere elements, desiring to build a united organization, is the workers' particular reliance.

Drive To Organize.

The decision of the Boston Conference of progressive delegates that the National Organization Committee initiate in New York as well as in other centers, organization drives in order to organize the open shops and restore union conditions is very significant. Already this is being done in New York, and steps are being taken to do so in Los Angeles. This means, that from now on the workers are to recognize the only one genuine labor union in this industry, the National Organization Committee.

True enough, the right wing octopus will not surrender so quickly; true, that it will through artificial means, here and there, still make known its existence, but its days are numbered. To the extent that the National Organization Committee goes ahead with its program, the influence and power of the right wing clique will become more and more negligent.

The decision of the conference to have national organizers sent out to every important needle trades center to organize branches of the National Organization Committee is of the utmost importance, but what is even more important is the new form of organization upon the basis of which the union is to be built.

The left wing for years has propagated the idea of a shop delegate system, but the right wing, whose throne was threatened by it, not only scoffed at it, but expelled those who dared to agitate for it. The Boston conference decided that hereafter the shop chairman conference should become a permanent institution, and all legislative power should eventually be transferred to it from the present outworn craft locals. This is a very real step in the direction of drawing more and more of the rank and file into the activities of the union and therefore assures the successful carrying out of the tasks confronting the National Organization Committee.

The formation of the National Organization Committee in Boston and the program adopted at the conference lays the corner stone for a new united organization of cloak and dressmakers. The struggle in the International Ladies Garment Workers Union enters its final phase.

MACHINIST LEFT WING URGES POLICY

By FRED BRILL

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THE 18th convention of the International Association of Machinists meets in Atlanta, Georgia, on September 17th for the first time in four years. What will it accomplish? What should left wingers do? What are the progressive elements inside of the organization doing in preparation? The answer to these questions depends on an analysis of the present state of the union.

The I. A. of M. follows at present a reactionary and destructive policy. Its membership is at a low ebb, about 70,000. Members are constantly dropping, new members drop out when they see that the union offers them nothing, and does nothing to organize the trade. Only a few new members are added, mainly garage mechanics. The large factories, the trustified factories are left untouched. The campaign

to organize the auto industry decided upon by the I. A. of M., the Metal Trades Dept. of the A. F. of L. and the A. F. of L. Detroit Convention was a complete failure, the entire campaign consisting of an attempt to convince the auto manufacturers through personal interviews that the unions could guarantee more able, and willing slaves than the companies themselves could provide. The Grand Lodge organizers simply build up their political fences.

Local organization campaigns fizzle out, because the business agents follow not a policy of appealing to the workers to fight for better conditions, but of winning over the boss to organize the men. The hundreds of thousands of unskilled and semi-skilled are neglected; the sole object of the bureaucrats being to maintain themselves at the expense of the