

Build the I. L. D.

By F. BROWN

THE recent Washington Conference of the International Labor Defense, which, besides being attended by the I.L.D. delegates proper, was honored by the presence of many fraternal delegates from various mass organizations

specially trade unions, and several outstanding personalities of the progressive movement, including Congressmen, is the best proof of the growing prestige of this organization. Such prestige is well-merited. It has grown out of the defense work conducted by the I.L.D. over a period of years, in the defense of hundreds of labor prisoners and assistance to their families, in the broad I.L.D. campaign in defense of liberties, etc.

With the upsurge of the big industrial unions and with the rising movement against the reactionary measures of the Tories, the task of the I.L.D. will become a much greater one. Its future will be bound up more and more with the struggle that will arise from the development of the People's Front in the United States. This was clearly pointed out by Comrade Browder at the last plenum of the Central Committee.

While the Central Committee never ceased to cooperate with this outstanding defense organization, the same cannot be said of some of the most important state organizations of our Party, where the I.L.D. has been abandoned. New organizations have sprung up in the broad struggle for civil liberties, instead of being strengthened for more effective defense activities and more efficient united front work within the broad struggle for the democratic rights of the masses.

The argument is incorrect that, because during the last period there were not many defense cases, and that even today, the defense cases are not so numerous as in the time of the Hoover era, the I.L.D. is no longer so vital. The facts prove that we are confronted with many defense cases especially in relation to the broad struggles conducted by the new industrial unions, and that such struggles against the reactionary forces and against vigilanteism, for democratic rights, are the order of the day. These are sufficient reasons, and more than sufficient reasons, to understand the role that the International Labor Defense must play. More than that, wherever the I.L.D. has been reduced to a small organization in many instances precisely because of the poor cooperation given by our

Party locally, we are duty-bound to take such steps that will bring the I.L.D. back to life and will guarantee the existence and the development of one of the most important organizations of the American people.

The recent partial victory in the Scottsboro case provides an important basis for strengthening the I.L.D. among the Negro people. The series of brilliant victories achieved by the I.L.D. and its legal staff in the Simpson, Herndon, DeJong and other cases, its splendid record of effective work in helping the families of political prisoners prove that the I.L.D. is not only an organization known to the American masses, but it is one of the powerful factors in the development of the progressive struggles of the American people.

The basis for the building of the I.L.D. into a broader, more powerful organization is here. Our Party cannot remain aloof in giving the I.L.D. its utmost support.

The establishment of civil rights committees, civil rights conferences and various other organizations that spring up in time of struggle, does not for a moment do away with the need for a most powerful I.L.D. It is precisely a stronger labor defense that will be instrumental in broadening out the movement of defense of political prisoners and of relief to their families, and at the same time stimulate and help unite all defense movements in the struggle for civil liberties.

One of the main tasks before us today is to take immediate steps to build up the I.L.D., especially in Cleveland, Detroit, Pittsburgh, where there are tremendous possibilities, where there is a burning need for a powerful defense organization to assist in the struggles of the industrial unions.

The Washington Conference of the International Labor Defense has proven that even in places where the I.L.D. is weak as an organization, as for example in Philadelphia and Newark, but where it has the support of our Party, it has been able to achieve real success in the struggle against injunctions and against vigilanteism. It was through the initiative of the I.L.D. that in both of these places

united front organizations have been set up, in which A. F. of L. and C. I. O. unions are actively engaged. Furthermore, the I. L. D. has proven to be able to enlist a large middle-class support on behalf of labor, which is another important achievement.

These examples, together with hundreds of others throughout the country show that the I. L. D. is an organization that is welcomed by the unions, as in Chicago where its magnificent work, in connection with the Memorial Day Massacre of the Republic Steel strikers, won the applause of the toiling people of this metropolis.

There are no excuses for state organizations that have grown in strength and in political ability not taking such steps as will make of the I. L. D. one of the bulwarks of labor. In line with the plenum discussions and decisions, the district bureaus will have to review their activities in relation to the I. L. D. for the purpose of increasing their cooperation and support and assigning new capable forces. While it is true that the Party members are engaged today in hundreds of activities, it is also true that the I. L. D. is such an important organization that it is necessary and worthwhile to lend forces to it. Besides, there are many Party members who would be eager to undertake defense work. It should not be difficult to get volunteers to whom the program and tasks of the I. L. D. can be made clear, and in this way prepare them to become good members of the I. L. D., more than that, the most active forces.

A strong defense organization supported by millions is a powerful factor in strengthening the fighting abilities and morale of the working class army in its struggle against the big industrialists, and stiffening the broad struggle of the people against reaction and fascism.