The Drift of the Labor Bureaucracy to the Right

By W. J. FOSTER

The illusion of a continued confidence in the American labor movement is proving a delusion. The very presence of the new bureaucratic leadership is fostering the appeasement of the employers. When American labor first began to make gains, after a long period of toil and struggle, the employers were quick to see that they had to fight for every gain. Workers then were inspired by the tradition of struggle, of resistance to the employer, of the rights of the working class to take care of itself. The labor movement was led by a genuine self-consciousness that the workers had the right to demand an improvement in working conditions. The employers were forced to concede a number of these demands, and even to grant concessions that went beyond them, in order to hold their workers. What an American labor movement is needed today is a movement that will fight the employers more persistently and more effectively than they have been fought in the past.

The report of the recent conference of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) is an illustration of the drift to the right of the labor movement. The AFL is the largest trade union organization in the world, and its every action is watched by labor movements in other countries. The AFL is a federation of trade unions, each of which is independent and autonomous, and the AFL itself is not a union but a federation of unions. The AFL has a President and a General Committee, and it is the job of the President to represent the AFL to the employers, and to negotiate with them on behalf of the AFL.

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