

What Was the Cleveland TUUL Convention?

By Ben Gitlow

IN estimating the T.U.U.L. Convention recently held in Cleveland, one must not attempt to work oneself up into a frenzy of religious enthusiasm but, on the contrary, one must soberly analyze the forces represented at the convention, how they were elected, the directives given before the convention, at the convention and following the convention, as well as the work of the convention itself. If we will take such an objective view then we can really judge it, recognize its accomplishments as well as its shortcomings.

Is there need for the establishment of a center for the new unions, the revolutionary and militant minorities in the existing A. F. of L. and independent unions, for the shop committees and organizing committees functioning in the unorganized industries? The answer must be emphatically: Yes! The organization of a genuine center of this kind which will *really* unite all the militant and revolutionary workers is absolutely necessary. But what actually took place?

The postponement of the Convention from May 30 to August 31, a period of three months after the elections of delegates to the May 30 convention had taken place in factories, mines, mills, shop committees and trade union organizations, was the first criminal act that helped wreck the possibility of the establishment of a genuine center with a broad mass base. This postponement which was prompted by factional considerations, emanating directly from Lozovsky and his clique in the R.I.L.U., and not by the needs of the workers, opened the convention to attack as an out-and-out Party affair, tended to narrow it down to the Party membership and a small fringe of the closest Party sympathizers.

The convention was further narrowed down by the one advertised as the outstanding leader of the convention, Wm. Z. Foster who in the August *Communist* gave the Party membership the perspectives for the conference. Not one word appeared in his article of the needs of the workers, of why it was necessary to organize a center; instead he informed the workingclass that the convention was called primarily as a mobilization and concentration point for the inner Party fight against those comrades expelled because they refuse to endorse the revision of Leninism now taking place in the Party. The gist of Foster's article was to go to Cleveland not to organize the workers, to establish a center, but to fight Lovestone! This made the convention a Party mobilization for factional purposes not a mobilization of representatives from factories, trade unions, shop committees, etc., to act upon the vital organizational and fighting needs of the workers. The conclusions of Wm. Z. Foster contained in the September *Communist* on the achievements of the TU.U.L. Convention, prove this without the shadow of a doubt.

A rank and file movement cannot be built up by the use of the trade union methods of the reactionary officialdom and precisely these methods were used in the preparation of the convention delegation. The will of the rank and file was flaunted. If the elections did not suit the Party faction leaders they were disregarded and delegates appointed to take the place of those regularly elected by the rank and file. The most active workers were intimidated—some forced to decline to run as delegates and others expelled in order to prevent their election. Delegates were appointed who were discredited while influential comrades with mass prestige and following were shoved aside. Local conferences were not called on the basis of representatives elected by the rank and file but were constituted by the Party fractions. At these local conferences leading local committees

and delegates were hand-picked by a few "leaders" on top and not selected by the rank and file. In addition delegates who were never active in the trade union field, who represented nobody but who could vote and create atmosphere were sent to Cleveland. By the use of such methods you do not build up a Trade Union Unity Center. Such a center starts with disunity and must necessarily in spite of all the fanfare and worked-up enthusiasm end in a caricature.

The trade union methods of the reactionary bureaucrats was continued in Cleveland. Regularly elected delegates, who were suspected of disagreeing with the present Party leadership, were kept off the convention floor and were denied even a formal hearing before the credentials committee. In the heyday of Gompers such brazen methods were never resorted to: a delegate was always given an opportunity to fight his case before the credentials committee and even on the floor of the convention—the case of Wm. F. Dunne at the Portland A.F. of L. convention, for example. The expulsion from the convention of Jack Rubenstein, militant textile fighter, of Passaic, New Bedford, etc. arrested, slugged and imprisoned scores of times for strike activity, head of the Youth Department of the T.U.E.L., took place on the grounds that he was expelled from the Party, that is, for his political opinions. The T.U.U.L. is not a Communist Party. To consider it as such, as was done in the case of Jack Rubenstein who was elected by the National Textile Workers Union, is to make a farce of the Trade Union Unity Center. This action on Rubenstein and other similar actions made Cleveland the burial city of the Trade Union Unity League. For this destructive work Wm. Z. Foster and the "leaders" of the Cleveland Convention will have to answer to the workers who wanted a genuine center, not expulsions, trade union methods, factionalism and disunity.

An examination of the convention delegation is essential in order to determine its mass character. We do not take the position that there were not present good militant revolutionary workers, full of enthusiasm and determination to build a genuine center. There were. But we must emphatically register the fact that the way the so-called leaders of Cleveland Convention organized and led the convention made the organization at the Cleveland Convention of a genuine center impossible.

The delegation at the Cleveland Convention was mostly self-appointed by the Party organizers. Out of the reported 690 delegates present over 550 (80%) were Party members. At the Cleveland convention the overwhelming majority should have been non-Party representatives elected by the workers from shops, shop committees, and union organizations. But actually it was just the opposite. That is why to date no estimate has been given of how many workers the delegates represented. In the article of Wm. Z. Foster in the September *Communist* there is not one word upon this important subject. All he has to say about this is the following:

"On the contrary, had the Convention been thoroly understood, properly evaluated, and the necessary work done, undoubtedly the Convention could have been twice as large as it was, it would have had a better mass base, and its general effects would have been much greater."

It would have had a better mass base, says Foster. But what was its mass base? On that there is silence. Because Foster and the others in charge cannot answer this question to the credit of the convention and their leadership, because they stand guilty of utilizing the Cleveland Convention for factional clique

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purposes, for the mobilization of a so-called mass approval of the infamous "enlightenment campaign," and for the organization of a Foster caucus to take over the Party apparatus. History repeats itself. After wrecking the T.U.E.L. by turning it into an unprincipled Party caucus instead of an organization of the Left-wing, Foster again commits the same damnable crime against the working class and organizes the T.U.U.L. as a Party caucus for inner Party purposes. Coupling this up with the trade union methods used one can see how complete was the disaster at Cleveland.

Some startling facts about the delegation. The Ohio delegation consisted of 172 delegates, most of them from the city of Cleveland. There is no T.U.E.L. organization in Ohio and only one local union of National Miners Union! Also a few small shop committees. Why this big delegation representing practically no one? In fact, practically the entire Party membership of the district was included in the delegation. From Detroit came 20 delegates, all Party members, not one non-Party member. Delegates came from Detroit representing basic industries who never saw the inside of a factory. Just one example of the many is Frankfeld who represented the auto workers, never worked in an auto factory or in any other factory, and is district organizer of the Young Communist League. The same was true of the other delegations. There were 151 youth delegates present. Whom did they represent? There were 72 women delegates present—what organizations did they represent? There were 181 delegates of the National Miners Union, when this organization has barely 3,000 members. Whom did they represent? What locals elected them? What was the basis of representation? The answers to these questions are avoided because true answers to them will show *how not to* organize a genuine T.U.U. League.

The best proof that the Cleveland Convention failed to organize a Trade Union Unity Center and did organize a Foster caucus in the selection of its national leadership: Secretary: Wm. Z. Foster; Ass't Sec'y; John Schmies who at the recent Party Plenum declared he was always wrong and that Foster was always right, in other words, that he is a Fosterite; Editor of Labor Unity: Wm. F. Dunne, Fosterite with Trotskyite sympathies; National Organizer: Jack Johnstone, a Fosterite; head of the Negro Department: Wm. Ford, a Fosterite, replacing Otto Hall, not a Fosterite, who organized the Negro Department in the T.U.E.L. over the head of the stubborn resistance and opposition of Wm. Z. Foster.

These facts speak for themselves and prove that the main purpose of the Cleveland Convention was to organize a *Foster caucus*.

The convention was not organized to discuss the serious problems and tasks facing it in the organization of a Trade Union Unity Center. A serious discussion of problems was lacking. In the little time allotted for discussion which took place after nearly all the reports were made, there was no organization of discussion on concrete questions, but general speeches, propagandistic and agitational in character. The convention assumed the character of a mass meeting not of a body called together for the purpose of welding together a Trade Union Unity organization that has for its purpose the organization and winning of the workers organized and unorganized for militant trade union activity against powerful, brutal, American capitalism. At the Party fractions held during the convention, which were attended by over 550 delegates thus clearly showing the composition of the convention delegation, the problems facing the convention, the question of the organization of the T.U.U.L.

were never raised. Only the "enlightenment campaign" was presented to the fraction, that is, the campaign against Lovestone, Gitlow and the hundreds of other comrades who were expelled from the Party because they are Communists, because they opposed the revision of Leninism, the abolition of Party democracy and the suppression of the right to express one's convictions within the Party. Only one side was presented at these meetings and no discussion on the part of the Party members from the floor was permitted, with such a stifling of discussion, with such an avoidance of the problems confronting the convention, it is no wonder that the convention itself was transformed into a speech-fest of oratory, and organized hooliganism, booing, catcalls, etc., of which Wm. Z. Foster is so proud in his article in the September *Communist*. Foster knows very well that those against whom he personally organized this hooliganism were never guilty as he was of licking the boots and singing the praises of Samuel Gompers, and of fighting Bolshevism and the Russian Revolution, and supporting American imperialism, as he did in 1917-1918-1919.

No efforts were made to get the militant and revolutionary minorities in the existing unions represented. The convention was conspicuous by the absence of such delegates. At the convention itself very little was heard about the necessity of fighting within the old unions. Nothing was said about the role of the aristocracy of labor. Little was said about the role of the Muste movement and the Socialist Party. The leaders attempted to bar out of consideration by the convention the question of a Labor Party. Only after I introduced a resolution for the organization of a Labor Party from below by the militant workers was this question injected into the convention at the closing hours. My resolution was not reported. It was not read. But this did not prevent the leaders of the convention from lying about it.

The program adopted by the convention, the reports and many of the resolutions were of such a character that the convention was given the appearance of a Communist Party not a Trade Union Unity Center—not, however of a Communist Party with a correct understanding of the conditions confronting the workers and their needs, but a Communist Party with incorrect policies, living on phrases and not on the realities of the class struggle.

(This article will be followed by another on "*The Program of the T. U. U. L.*" and a final one on the "*The T. U. U. L. Convention and the C.P.-Majority Group*." These articles will appear in the coming issues of the *Revolutionary Age*).

—Editorial Committee.

OUR NEW NATIONAL COUNCIL

Our recent Enlarged Session of the National Committee elected a new *National Council* to lead our struggle for the return of the Party to the line of Leninism. The National Council is composed of the following comrades:

Bail, A.; Becker, L.; Bentall, J. O.; Benjamin, D.; Bixby, W.; Cohen, S.; Dawson, Ellen; Gallant, I.; Galio, P.; Gitlow, B.; Gitlow, Kate; Grey, D.; Gray, Marion; Gross, A.; Hankin, M.; Herberg, W.; Herman, B.; Intrator, M.; Kalfides, B.; Kobel, A.; Kornutzian, M.; Lamb, Grace; Lovestone, J.; Lurye, Minnie; Marks, L.; Miller, B.; Miller, W.; Nehama, S.; Nemser, M.; Novak, Ch.; Pires, R.; Pultur, Elsie; Reed, J.; Ralph, B.; Rubenstein, P.; Shaffer, J.; Silvis, Miriam; Sorenson, J.; Smith, Mary; Siro, P.; Vrateric, F.; Wagshull, M.; Welsh, E.; White, W. J.; Wolfe, B. D.; Yablon, M.; Yampolsky, Clara; Zam, H.; Zimmerman, Ch. S.

The first meeting of the National Council elected Comrade *Lovestone* as *Chairman* and Comrade *Gitlow* as *Secretary*. Comrade *Gitlow* was also elected as *Editor* of our organ, *Revolutionary Age*.