Problems Of CIO Consolidation

By JAY LOVESTONE

FOR the C.I.O. the problem of consolidation and stabilization is not less important than the question of expansion. Both are phases of the task of the hour for the workers: the job of laying a sound foundation for a militant labor movement.

The hundreds of thousands of workers who have been pouring into the C.I.O. unions are inexperienced in practical trade unionism. They cannot be turned into determined, active union men at one stroke. The officers of the C.I.O. affiliates should go out of the way to develop the more capable local forces into leaders with a sense of responsibility and devotion. The organizations which have sprung up in the ranks of workers never before unionized must be stabilized. The big gains registered in the almost torrential wave of organization under the banner of the CIO must be consolidated Only in this fashion can the CIO hold what it has won and utilize the present gains for the extension of the drive to organize the millions still working under open shop conditions.

Open or camouflaged A. F. of L. Executive Council cynics may rave and rant that the CIO membership is not yet settled, is not yet solidified. Of course this is so. However, this is not decisive. What is decisive in the relationship between the A. F. of L. and the C.I.O. is the difference in direction, in the very nature of the trends confronting both bodies. The CIO faces a problem of influx; the A. F. of L. confronts exodus. With the CIO it's a case of consolidation; with the A. F. of L. it's a case of disintegration. The C.I.O. faces problems of growth; the A. F. of L. is beset by difficulties of decline.

Stand by the "Older Men"

Integrally bound up with the question of the growth and consolidation of the CIO is the problem of the so-called older worker in the mass production industries. For years the employers turned the older workers down and out as human wrecks, as unwanted, as useless material to be cast on the scrap heap of industry. In the course of the General Motors strike, the bosses all of a sudden began to pretend that they were solicitous of the welfare of the older workers. This was done to pit them against the younger ones who had a better chance to hold on to employment. The older workers were given the fraudulent impression that now that the younger ones were striking they had the chance of a lifetime to make secure their jobs for a lifetime. It was thru such propaganda that quite a few of the older workers were roped into the Flint Alliance and pitted against the union.

This is a very serious problem. When a banker or capitalist politician is 45 years of age he is a stripling, a budding youngster with a future ahead of him. When an auto worker or steel worker gets to be 45 he is old—speeded up into old age. Here we have the why and the wherefore for a superficially strange phenomenon. The biggest employers are complaining about a shortage of skilled help while there are hundreds of thousands of skilled workers on the W.P.A. lists. Why? Thirty-five out of every hundred workers on WPA are 45 to 65 years of age. At least fifty percent range from 25 to 44. These hundreds of thousands are old enough to be members of a bankers' club, a chamber of commerce, a Harvard alumni association, but too old to be given a chance to grind out dividends for the gentry crowding the rosters of these select societies.

It is the task of the CIO unions in the mass production industries to face this old age question seriously and boldly. Careful strategy must be mapped out to avoid the danger of the corporations playing the older against the younger workers. This situation lends additional weight to the question of seniority. No blueprint can be worked out for all unions and industries in regard to the seniority issue.

We Have But a Truce

In general the present settlements secured by the CIO are more in the nature of a truce than complete, decisive and crushing victories. When we make this point we do not, in the least, minimize the great significance of the victories which have been and are being scored by the CIO. We only underscore the need for adequate preparations by the unions to hold and extend these gains. Let no one for even a fraction of a second imagine that the giant corporations are accepting as final the licking given them by the CIO in recent weeks. They are biding their time. Perhaps they will strive to hit back when the next economic crisis breaks.

Some plain talk revealing the mood of the financial magnates, after the steel settlement, was presented to us by Edward H. Collins, associate financial editor of the New York **Herald-Tribune.** On March 8th, Mr. Collins confessed:

> "Wall Street's slogan is 'Don't Sell Steel short'; but the advice that this writer has received from labor experts is, 'Don't sell John Lewis short.' In other words, the officials of Carnegie-Illinois were faced with the prospect that they might not be able to beat Mr. Lewis even if they did fight it out with him. They were presented, in other words, with a virtual fait accompli . . .
>
> "Moreover, in view of the success of Mr. Lewis in getting more money and shorter hours for his followers, it is something of a question how long company unions can co-exist with C.I.O. unions.
>
> "The advice, 'Don't sell John L. Lewis short' is undoubtedly sound advice.
>
> "But short-sale or no short-sale, Mr. Lewis is still not a seasoned investment. He will face his real test, not in the next few months, but when business goes into the next depression."

The Company Mob—A Fascist Comer

No one needs a financial hand book to decipher this. It would be fatal folly to assume that because many company unions have been and will be worsted by the CIO unions, therefore, all company union dangers are gone. It would be suicidal to assume that the employers will not find and resort to new weapons. During the General Motors strike we had an inkling of some of these weapons. First and foremost as a danger facing the unions and all labor is the company mob. This is not an ordinary aggregation of employment agency scab riff raff. The company mob is no mere pure American vigilante racket. The company mob may be a "decent," respectable, home-loving, job-craving" collection of non-striking workers gathered into an "innocent club" run by the invisible (if necessary) hand of the corporation management. The Flint Alliance was an organization of this sort.

It is in the company unions and in outfits like the Flint Alliance—the company mob type—that the most serious menace of fascist organization lurks. The time to fight and crush this menace—with the greatest likelihood of success—is before it matures fully, before it assumes serious proportions. That is why it is imperative to fight against the beginnings of these fascist cancers right now, today, before the employing class launches its counter-attack.

Modern Strikes and Modern Wars

In waging the strike struggles today and in preparing for the battles of tomorrow we must not lose sight of one fact—or we are through. Modern (mass) strikes are like modern (mass) wars. There are no civilians in modern wars and there are none in strikes gripping mass production plants dominating entire cities or communities. More and more, up-todate wars are first waged and then declared. Sometimes war is fought but not even declared officially. Note Mussolini's and Hitler's invasion of Spain. Keep in mind the Japanese war on China and the subsequent creation of the "bird of peace" state—Manchoukuo. We must be prepared to face lockouts which will not be formally declared by corporations.

Furthermore, it is universally accepted that women, children, and non-combatants in general are really involved in a good-sized, respectable and respected modern war. So it is with a mass strike. Such a struggle can never be won by labor unless the women, the children, the entire families are drawn actively into the fight for decent conditions and the right to organize. In big strikes, in strikes in mass production plants, the union must assume the character of an army—with strong leadership, with capacity for quick striking power, with tremendous mobility for action by the mass. Hence, the decisive importance of the Womans Emergency Brigade and the Woman's Auxiliary. Likewise, the role of songs, of music. There is truth as well as poetry in the statement that an army that cannot sing cannot fight.

In the same sense we must face frankly the fact that especially in strikes involving mass production plants does the element of "public opinion" play a role. We may deride this factor as much as we please. We may very correctly analyze its origin, its being manufactured by the bourgeois press. This is all objectionable, but it is a fact. And in wars we must face facts objectively as well as fearlessly! Besides, we must never lose sight of the fact that a goodly portion of the so-called public consists of workers in other industries not on strike or even unorganized —and all too often relying on the boss press, pulpit, and movie to do their thinking for them. Effective publicity is essential for a union victory. Strategic moves must never be made without regard of so-called public opinion.

No doubt all of this involves a problem of leadership and a capacity for policy-making. A sense for the latter is all-important. It takes time and varied experience to develop this sixth-sense, as it were. Thorogoing union democracy is an essential prerequisite for the development of such fighting, practical leaders from the ranks. Aid by the more experienced unions to the newly organized is of paramount import towards speeding up the development of such leading officer types for the army of labor.

"Into the National Guard"

It is obvious that much of the old strike strategy must be discarded as inadequate for the new struggles in view of the new conditions of production and social relations. Radical workers as well as the more conservative ones face this duty. Let me illustrate with but one instance. We know that the National Guard is a strike-breaking agency in uniform. It is an organic part of the capitalist state machinery which is a strike-breaking government. Yet, it is not at all out of place to have some good reliable trade union militants join the National Guard, win genuine standing in the ranks of the Guardsmen, many of whom are workers. Such standing can come in as a source of vital strength when the N. G. is called upon for strike duty. But we cannot emphasize too strongly that such standing must be won on the basis of merit of service in training and not thru clumsy distribution of long manifestoes that are unreadable—or, fortunately, are not read. . . .

"Into the National Guard" is a slogan that should not be toyed with. It must be given serious consideration.

The Growth Auto Work

by STUART MEFFAN

IN previous articles I have tried to give you some first hand accounts of the sit-down strikes waged against G. M. in the auto industry. Thoughtful workers must have often asked themselves how it was that labor suddenly blossomed forth with an organization of such tremendous power as the U.A.W.A., after many attempts to organize the industry had failed, after so many thought the task hopeless. The reasons are many.

In the first place the only organization in the past which had the resources to do the job,, either did not wish to or was afraid to do it,—namely the A.F. of L. Before the depression the auto industry employed a vast army of immigrants anxious to do anything for the illusion of high wages in the land of their adoption without causing trouble to their kind benefactors. Native Americans from the backward South and the farm lands flocked to this industry situated in a land of milk and honey. With the depression came the "red union," the "Auto Workers Industrial," a very properly set up industrial union, without any members worth speaking about, which disappeared late in 1934 with the change of the Communist party line. I.W.W's and craft unionists (M.E.S.A.) tried to get a hold on the industry but without any measurable or lasting degree of success.

Union Sentiment Grows

Meanwhile the economic sufferings experienced by the auto workers amongst others showed its effect on the political field in the election of Roosevelt as president and also, important to Detroit, a liberal, Frank Murphy, as Mayor. The N.R.A. caused many workers to join a union in the belief that the President wanted them to Even at this stage they did not visualize the organization as one to be run by themselves alone. With the Green-Roosevelt agreement delivering them safely back into the hands of the big auto corporations the organization practically collapsed again. However a nucleus was left around which the now huge U.A.W.A. was to grow.

The recovery of the auto industry with its huge profits could only be accomplished in one way in the era of declining capitalism. The exploitation of the workers had to be increased in every way possible. Thus real wages declined in some cases; in others the speed up was intensified. The worker's life became more miserable every day. In spite of previous disappointments, every little gain by the union increased its strength and with a successful sit-down at the Midland Steel Corporation in Detroit, the heart of the industry and famed as the Home of Open-Shoppers, the upsurge started in earnest. Late in the day it is, but the workers in the industry seem