

Problems Confronting the Convention of the ILGWU

By ROSE WORTIS

TODAY the annual convention of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union opens in Chicago. It is therefore timely to estimate the developments in this union in the past year and the problems confronting the workers in the industry.

The International Ladies Garment Workers Union was one of the first unions organized in the needle trades and has a history of militant struggle which dates back to the very early days of its existence.

Because of the persecutions and expulsions of the militant rank and file and the officials' policy of collaborating with the bosses, the union up to 1933 had been reduced to a skeleton. Discontented with the breakdown of union conditions, influenced by the mass agitation of the militant elements in the union and the struggle conducted by the Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union, the needle trades workers gave definite expression to their discontent through mass strikes involving tens of thousands of workers throughout the country.

The employers and the government, who in many other industries

are fighting tooth and nail against the recognition of the A. F. of L. unions understood that the situation in the needle trades was very different. Here there was a revolutionary industrial union steeled in battle against the bureaucrats and the bosses, an industrial union which had secured great improvements in the conditions of the workers in the fur trade and in other sections of the needle trades. Therefore the N. R. A. and the bosses in the needle trades, in order to prevent the workers from going into the Needle Trade Workers Industrial Union threw their entire support to the I. L. G. W. U.

Should Be Powerful Weapon

With this support, the I. L. G. W. U. became a mass union with a membership numbering more than 100,000. Such a union under militant leadership could have become a most powerful weapon in the hands of the workers to maintain the splendid gains that the workers have won through their struggle and an important factor in the entire labor movement.

How has this organized strength of these thousands of workers been

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These three boys are part of

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used by the bureaucracy of the I. L. G. W. U., the Dubinskys, the Zimmermans? What is the record that they are coming with to the convention?

The answer to these questions is given in the rapid decline in the conditions of the workers not only in New York but throughout the entire country where the bosses are rapidly reducing the standards of the dressmakers and the other needle trades workers to the level of the pre-strike period.

While the bureaucracy and their hand-picked delegates (with few exceptions) will be rejoicing at the convention and singing songs of praise for the wonderful leadership and achievements of the I. L. G. W. U., the workers back home in the shops and factories know the real truth as to how under the misleadership of this outfit, their precious gains won through struggle, have been taken back by the bosses.

No Rank and File Delegates

The delegation at the convention in Chicago will certainly not reflect the problems and the moods and needs of the tens of thousands of workers in the union. Not a single representative, a single spokesman of the rank and file from New York will be present. The same is true of many other localities where every left wing candidate has been eliminated from the ballot. This convention in the true fashion of the A. F. of L. conventions will be a

feast and drinking orgy at the expense of the dressmakers.

In many localities the delegates, most of them officials and their henchmen, will get \$15 a day. Arrangements have been made for the convention to spend four days at the World Fair. In the top bureaucracy this convention will be an occasion to plot further conspiracies to keep down the workers and to mortgage the union to the most powerful bosses' interests in the industry.

Despite all the trickery and persecution, a small group of rank and file delegates from locals outside of New York have found their way to the convention (if the machine does not trump up charges to unseat them at the last moment). This group of class conscious militant workers go to the convention with a real constructive program of fighting for maintaining conditions in the trade, the minimum wage scale, the 35-hour week, unemployment insurance, and for real democracy in the union as the best guarantee for maintaining these conditions. They will fight for a closer alliance with all militant forces of labor in struggle against the impending imperialist war, against fascism, and all other problems of great concern to the entire labor movement.

It is this small delegation that will have to unmask the phrasemongers and treacherous henchmen of the machine, the Zimmermans, who, while mouthing revolutionary phrase have carried through the same treacherous class collaboration policies in Local 22 and throughout the country.

Fur Workers, Attention

A special mass meeting of furrriers will be held tonight at the Cooper Union Hall under the auspices of the Fur Workers Industrial Union.

This meeting will launch a drive against Saturday ~~work~~ and for wage increases.

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