

# State AFL United On Roosevelt Victory

by Rose Wortis

The New York State AFL wrote an important page in the history of the labor movement at the 81st convention in Syracuse where by an almost unanimous vote it endorsed President Roosevelt.

Since New York is the largest state organization of the AFL, representing almost a fourth of AFL national membership, its action must of necessity influence the deliberations of the executive council now in session in Chicago.

The significance of the New York State Convention lies not only in its actions but in the general spirit which pervaded the delegates. It reflected the changes gradually taking place in the AFL nationally and in our state — changes that promise to transform the AFL from a conservative body dominated by a handful of shortsighted labor politicians to a vital, living, energetic organization speaking for millions of the most advanced workers in the State and nation.

Many delegates were younger than delegates to earlier conventions. Many came from the shops. They reflect the change that has come in the AFL with the recent growth and emergency of new leading forces in the locals and trade bodies.

This could be noted in the numerous resolutions coming from local unions dealing with a variety of subjects. Two-hundred and fifty were referred to the resolutions committee alone. It could be noted by the attendance and serious discussions at meetings of Convention committees—in the past considered a mere formality. But especially in the independent thinking of the delegates on basic issues such as the Roosevelt endorsement.

This independence is all the more evident when it is noted that president Thomas Murray, Edward McGarry, secretary of the resolutions committee and some of the leading lights of the executive council opposed the Roosevelt endorsement, which was almost unanimously adopted.

## NO RED-BAITING

The changes were seen in the complete absence of red-baiting or CIO-baiting. As a matter of fact, many delegates barred from the central trades of New York for political reasons by the bureaucratic machine still in control there actively participated in the state convention.

The convention not only reaffirmed its pledge to continue and intensify its unbroken war production record but pledged to use its organized strength to guarantee that when the men and women return from the battlefronts they will find a better world.

Supporters of Hooverism, in its modern Dewey version, found few adherents at Syracuse save those who were won by juicy appointments. Dewey's message with the hypocritical slogan, "Jobs not doles," had a hollow sound, and they didn't go for it.

Despite Dewey's maneuver of promising the leadership of the Federation construction contracts after the war and a favored position with the state administration as against the CIO, the pro-Roosevelt sentiment swept the convention like a tidal wave threatening to engulf all who stood in the way. This widespread sentiment compelled the leaders of the executive council to abandon their petty calculations and go along.

The pro-Roosevelt tide was further manifested at the state industrial conferences of machinists, teamsters, painters, hotel and restaurant, meat cutters, bakers, and others. Pro-Roosevelt resolutions came from such important central bodies in the state as Buffalo, Rochester, Jamestown and Utica as well as from numerous local unions and district councils.

The convention vote came after a crowded and tense session where, after a long debate, the opposition

## FDR's Record, as State AFL Sees It

"... Since his induction into the office of President in 1933 to the present date, he has adhered to the policies of safeguarding human freedom and liberty and has brought about by legislative means many important laws for the protection of workers of our country. . . . He has prepared the nation to fight in the war which was inevitably and cruelly forced upon it. . . . Under his leadership, since the war began, our armed forces, in cooperation with our allies, are winning campaigns in all theaters of war which have brought final victory in sight. . . . His leadership and experience are still essential to the nation in winning the war and winning the peace after the war. . . ."—Excerpts from New York State Federation of Labor endorsement of President Roosevelt, adopted Aug. 23 at Syracuse convention.

could muster only seven votes, three from Dewey appointees—Vincent J. Ferris of the Liquor Commission, Henry O'Connell of the State Industrial Commission and Edward J. McGarry, chairman of the Board of Appeals of the State Unemployment Insurance Committee. Most significant is the fact that leadership at these sessions came from the teamsters and from upstate communities, where the Republican machine is still powerful. The fact that many upstate Republicans such as Edward Ackerly, vice-president of the painters union; Emmanuel Kovalesky of the Hotel and Restaurant Union and others joined with Democrats in support of the President shows the nonpartisan character of the Roosevelt endorsement. Not a single resolution was received from any local in either New York or upstate for the endorsement of Dewey.

## APPROVE KILGORE BILL

The Roosevelt endorsement was strengthened by adoption of a general program dealing with the needs of labor and the nation today and in the postwar period such as the approval of the Kilgore-Celler Bill which was implemented by concrete proposals for reconversion as it affects New York, the Murray-Wagner-Dingell Health Bill, a rounded-out housing program, slum clearance, reconstruction of the waterfront, airways, public works, etc.

A powerful blow for national unity was struck by the convention in the discussion and action on the Negro question which placed the New York organization far ahead of the national AFL. The opening speech by president Thomas Murray placed the convention squarely on record against the fomenters of race hatred. In a forthright denunciation of these enemies of the nation, Murray said:

"As part of this, we must fight every form of racial and social discrimination. Without mercy we must stamp out those who seek to split our ranks by setting Negro against white and Christian against Jew. I point to the recent costly transit strike in Philadelphia, a disgrace to those involved. Obviously it was inspired by one of the groups which I have mentioned, to destroy public confidence and faith in organized labor."

The state program included a point against racial discrimination. Resolutions reaffirming the principles of the FEPC, congratulations

# With Lewis Beaten Spurs 3d Ave. Pact

With John L. Lewis' bid for power defeated, the CIO announced yesterday that it would begin negotiations for a 3d Ave. Railway System within a week or 10 days. The TV

## While Congress Fiddles:

# Reconversion Almost Here, Says Roosevelt

President Roosevelt has ordered an immediate general census of industry, wage, labor and other economic factors, observing that "the recent favorable development of the military situation" confronts the country with early reconversion. The country cannot wait for the regular biennial census of manufacture due next year, the President noted, because by that time "industry will probably be in the midst of reconversion."

The President said further in his letter ordering the census that reconversion is a "huge and intricate task requiring careful preparations."

In discussing his letter on the census the President was asked by reporters to comment on a statement by Chairman Robert Doughton of the Ways and Means Committee. Doughton said that there was "still a great deal of unnecessary excitement about the unemployment problem" and added that "we can cross that bridge when we come to it."

President Roosevelt replied that what we want is employment. If we have employment we won't have the problem of unemployment.

## DISCARD PROPOSALS

Will Congress recognize that reconversion is a "huge and intricate task" of providing employment? Thus far, legislators who are responsible for a reconversion pro-

gram have thrown into the basket every proposal to prepare for reconversion or give it some coordinated direction. As matters stand reconversion legislation that has been passed or is favored for passage, covers only financial settlement on contracts and disposal of government surplus property. When the Kilgore-Murray-Truman Bill was killed, the whole idea of planning reconversion so as to keep up the high production and employment level achieved for the war was rejected. Also rejected was the idea that wage and high purchasing levels must be maintained as a base for a high level economy. Rejected was also the elementary provision of jobless payments more adequate than are now paid in states.

If the reactionary Republican-polltaxer bloc in Congress continues to have its way, the results of the census ordered by the President will be just nice records for future study by students of economy. But, if popular resentment and unity rises to a high enough point to force a change of attitude, the survey could prove to be a valuable source of information for the carrying out of a constructive reconversion program. That the problem is upon us was well stressed several days ago in the United Business Service forecast that there will be "close to 5,000,000 jobless within six months of the end of the war in Europe."

## RESPECT TOWARD CIO

The attempt of the Republican politicians, with the aid of the Social Democrats and their stooge, Philip Pearl, publicity director of the AFL, to artificially build antagonism against the CIO and PAC, proved a big flop. The convention showed a respectful attitude toward the CIO. Secretary-treasurer George Meany's remark that the CIO endorsed his statement on the rise of the cost of living as compared to wages was well received by the delegates. The only CIO-baiting smuggled into the discussion came from the Social Democrat Joseph Tuvim of the ILGWU. It fell flat.

The growing discrepancy between the top leadership and its affiliated organizations was dramatically expressed at the convention. If the New York State Federation of Labor is to fulfill its responsibility to the million and a half members, it must sooner or later—the sooner the better—recognize that old-timers, no matter how valuable their services may have been in the past, cannot monopolize the leadership. Younger men and women coming from the ranks, representing important organizations in the state must take their place in the leadership if the movement is to advance.

The New York labor movement, both AFL and CIO, can be justly proud of its contribution to the war. It occupies first place in the nation in its strict adherence to the no-strike pledge, its production record and its activity in all phases of war work. Since New York is the decisive state in the elections labor's responsibilities in helping to win the state for the President are greater than ever before.

The immediate problem before the AFL in New York is to translate the convention decisions into life.

One of the shortcomings of the convention was that it adopted no practical program for the mobilization of the membership for the election campaign. In view of what happened at the convention, this task certainly cannot be left to the executive council. A program for the election campaign must be worked out by affiliated unions without delay. This can be done on the basis of the recommendations of president Green that all AFL unions set up political action committees.

Roosevelt's election will be determined not by resolutions, important as they may be, but by hard day to day work in organizing the campaign for registration in every shop and on every job. The CIO registration campaign is already getting into swing. The AFL must follow suit.

## Quill Association Holds Ball Oct. 7

The Michael J. Quill Association is holding its first annual ball on Oct. 7, in the Grand Ballroom of the Concourse Plaza Hotel, it is announced by John P. O'Donnell, president of the association.

Tickets (price \$1.20) and advertising agreements for a souvenir journal are available from the association at 2486 Grand Concourse.