

I. W. W. Convention Hears Representatives of Red International

The question of international affiliation was again brought to the front in the I. W. W. when James P. Cannon and Robert Minor spoke before the Fifteenth General Convention now in session in behalf of the Red International of Labor Unions and extended the official invitation of that body to the I. W. W. to send delegates to the forthcoming World Congress. Strong opposition to any consideration of the question was manifested by a part of the delegates, when the request of the Red International was read by the chairman, but on the roll call vote the majority voted in favor of hearing the message of the Red International. This action of the convention marks a new and most significant development. It was the first time, in the long controversy over the question, that a delegate body of the I. W. W. ever heard the proposals of the Red International put forward by anyone authorized to represent it. The I. W. W. in the past has received most of its information from prejudiced sources, and the inevitable result of this has been to prejudice the majority of the members against it. Several delegates declared on the floor of the convention that they had never yet heard the side of the Red International presented.

Minor extended to the convention the fraternal greetings of the fifteen million workers in the Red International, and appealed to the I. W. W.

to join hands with them in the world wide battle against capitalism. He drew special attention to the critical situation in Germany and showed how the plans of International Capital to crush the revolution there, make the necessity of international solidarity of the workers clearer than ever.

"The workers of Germany," he said, "are in the future going to raise the red flag and they are going to fight for it too—they must, whether they want to or not. These workers are going to be represented in the World Congress next March, and they want to meet your representatives there. They want you to help them work out a way so that when they get control of the whole German nation the country will not be flooded with capitalist bands of mercenaries, to shoot them to death and take it away again."

Cannon said the aim of the Red International was to unify and consolidate the revolutionary labor movement within each country as well as on an international scale. "It will be the instrument by which this result is finally accomplished in America," he said. "The interests of the working class demand that, in spite of all difference, we find the way to work together in the common fight. If we do not try to do it, and do not continue to try persistently and patiently, we are failing in our duty to the working class."

Argument is made that the Red International of Labor Unions has for a purpose the liquidation of the I.

W. W. There is no foundation for such a statement. The Red International of Labor Unions takes a practical point of view toward all labor organizations. It takes conditions as it finds them and works from that basis. It does not undertake to liquidate the I. W. W., and neither does it undertake to liquidate the United Mine Workers, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers or any other functioning labor organization. This could not be done. The Red International of Labor Unions seeks to unify all the workers' organizations on a common platform for action against the capitalist class, regardless of organizational differences.

"It must be frankly admitted that there are many differences between us, and we will make no headway by trying to cover up that fact. The Red International does not hide real differences; it brings them out in the open and tries, by their discussion and mutual concession to arrive at a unified program of action. It is not to be expected that all the differences between us can be overcome at once.

We have no patent prescription to work such a miracle. But we say that in spite of those differences we must strive to find a common ground for the fight against the capitalists. We can agree now on 75 per cent of the program, and work together for it, even if we continue to argue with each other over the remaining 25 per cent. This may appear difficult, but it can be done if we will all develop a little flexibility of mind and keep

our attention centered on the big things instead of the little ones.

"We have a common fight now against criminal syndicalism laws and injunctions and for the release of class war prisoners. And there are many other points where there is no conflict of interest or principle between us. On these questions, at least, we must learn how to conduct a joint struggle. And you can depend upon it, fellow workers, that a joint struggle for these things will bring us closer together and make it easier to reach an agreement on many other disputed questions. The first step toward this is fraternal discussion. Therefore, we propose that you accept the invitation to send to the next World Congress two or three delegates, without obligations or restrictions, who will sit with the workers' representatives of all other countries on that congress, and then come back and report to you. You should not fear to do this. The only people who have a right to be afraid of the leaders of the Russian Revolution are the capitalists of the world.

"Another point I wish to speak about is the decision of the Second Congress of the Red International to sever its organic connection with the Communist International. This was done in order to effect a compromise with the C. G. T. U. of France, and the revolutionary syndicalists generally, and thus to pave the way for complete unity in one international organization of all workers who, regardless of tactical differences, want to join in the common struggle

against world capitalism. Since this organic connection with the Communist International has been raised as one of the chief objections to the affiliation of the I. W. W. in the past I hope you will not fail to appreciate the significance of this action. It shows that the Red International puts unity and solidarity above all other considerations, and is willing to make concessions to the revolutionary syndicalists in order to attain it.

"The time allowed here does not give us the opportunity to propose a program of action. That must be done by the World Congress. We wish only to assure you of the friendly spirit in which we come here, and the earnest desire to work together. If you will meet us half-way, the first and hardest part of the problem will be solved."

In Next Week's "Worker": The I. W. W. and the Red International.

In this article, which is of timely importance in view of the consideration of the question by the General Convention of the I. W. W. now in session, Comrade Cannon will analyze the role of the I. W. W. in the labor movement today, its attitude toward the Red International, its conflict with the revolutionary trade unionists and the Communists, and the reasons for it. It will show the tremendous influence already exerted upon the American trade union movement by the Red International and outline its probable future influence on the I. W. W.