

The Organization of Agricultural Workers

Resolution Adopted by the Vladivostok Conference of the P.P.T.U.S.

THE countries bordering the Pacific Ocean are primarily agrarian lands. To this very day a considerable measure of fairly strong feudal relations have been preserved in the agricultural industry of these countries, though under the influence of foreign and native capital the old forms of tenure are being broken up and new forms, capitalist forms of landownership (plantation organization, large-scale farming and rich peasant holdings), are coming more to the fore, bringing with them large numbers of agricultural workers working for hire. In India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Korea and China the agricultural workers number tens of millions. In view of the numerical weakness of the industrial proletariat in these countries, the matter of organizing the rural proletariat acquires outstanding importance. Now, the peculiar features of colonial land tenure make for the tremendous concentration of labor power on small tracts of land, thus promoting the work of organizing the land laborers.

The vital interests of the revolutionary labor movement in the Pacific countries and the struggle against imperialism and colonial oppression render it imperative that the agricultural workers of these countries be immediately organized into independent class trade unions.

The agricultural workers' unions must rope in, first and foremost, the workers employed on capitalist plantations (tea, tobacco, sugar, rubber, rice, etc.), the workers on large estates and farms and the men employed in timber cutting and forest clearing. These workers must make up the fundamental section of the union, but around them there must be organized the many millions of feed laborers, day laborers and seasonal workers scattered up and down the rural districts on smaller rich peasant and other farm holdings.

The land and forest workers' unions should also organize those workers employed on rural plants of any given plantation in the primary treatment of agricultural raw materials, this being done in those cases where there are no independent unions for these men.

As they stand on the platform of the revolutionary class struggle, the land and forest workers' unions must be organs primarily to promote the development of the workers' economic struggles. Their fundamental immediate task is that of fighting to improve the material position and status of the land workers, raise their cultural level and widen their political horizons and class outlook, and thus draw them into the common revolutionary struggle of the whole working class against imperialism and capitalism. The main points in their program of demands must be: working hours to be reduced to 8 per day for adults and 6 per day for minors; annual paid holiday of 2 weeks; overtime at double rates; abolition of share-cropping (as in Japan); fixed wage—by the hour, day or month—to be paid in legal tender, the slogan being at the same time broadcast that real wages for the land and forest workers must be raised to the level of the average earnings of the industrial workers in the same district (in India, for instance, the wages of plantation workers might be raised to the level of the wages paid the textile workers); equal pay for equal work by women and men; fit housing accommodation to be provided; no dismissed worker to be evicted from his home until he has been provided with new living quarters; social insurance covering sickness, permanent incapacity, unemployment and old age, said insurance to be a charge on the employers and state; prohibition of night labor for women and of hired child labor; unrestricted right of combination and to strike; abolition of serf and semi-

serf conditions of labor, corporal punishment, fines, brutal treatment, and the abolition of slave laws like the "penal sanction" of Indonesia; the abrogation of anti-labor laws banning the workers' class organizations, strikes, press, etc.; struggle for the confiscation of all lands held by big landowners, the monasteries and the churches without compensation; and struggle against the money-lenders, militarists and imperialists (China and elsewhere).

Without active assistance from the organized industrial workers it will be extremely difficult for the rural workers themselves to build up their own organization capable of waging successful struggle against their exploiters and oppressors. It is therefore essential to set up special commissions under the auspices of the industrial workers' unions for the purpose of promoting the activities and organization of the land and forest workers. To this end use must be made primarily of those factory workers who are employed in the towns for only part of the year and spend the rest of the season in their native villages.

The struggle of the land and forest workers' unions must be prosecuted in close contact with the struggle of the poorer peasantry, the small holders, and their revolutionary organizations. There is much in common in the interests of the agricultural workers and the interests of the toiling peasantry—the poorer peasantry and small holders suffer equally with the agricultural workers from the exploitation to which they are subjected by the landowners, capitalists, employers and imperialists. To prevent, however, the proletarian character of the land and forest work-

ers' movement from being glossed over, and in order to build up a strong and reliable nucleus and secure for the rural proletariat the leading role in the developing agrarian revolution, the agricultural workers must be lined up in their own independent class trade union organization. The toiling peasantry and small farmers must be organized in separate peasant unions.

Organizational connections between the land and forest workers' unions and the militant peasant organizations may take the line (local conditions being taken into due consideration), of the formation of joint land laborer and peasant committees of action to co-ordinate the struggle against the landowners, money-lenders and imperialists and build up a joint block of the land workers and peasants.

As regards the reactionary peasant organizations under the leadership of the land owners and big farmers (and of the Kuomintang in China), the land workers' unions should fight for their break-up and so free from their influence those proletarian and poor peasant elements belonging to these bodies.

The work of organizing the agricultural proletariat of the Pacific countries in independent class trade unions is the work of the revolutionary T.U. movement of these countries. For this purpose a special commission should be set up under the T.U. centre of each country, this commission to be instructed to hammer out a concrete plan of work and outline those districts where activities are to be begun, and there set up local commissions to organize the land and forest workers.