

An Important Step Toward International Trade Union Unity

Trade union unity is the most important question before the trade unions of the world. In France and Norway great advances have been made in uniting the trade unions. We publish below the reply of the Red International of Labor Unions to the Norwegian Trade Union Federation on the question of the unity of the world trade union movement.

To the Secretariat of the Norwegian Trade Union Federation,

Comrades:

The Executive Bureau of the Red International of Labor Unions having discussed your letter dated December 20 and the resolution of your Congress, expresses its satisfaction with the fact that the recent Trade Union Congress in Norway recognized trade union unity as a vital necessity, declared for organizational unification on the basis of class struggle and stated that the workers' National Trade Union Federation of Norway was prepared to

render every assistance in the achievement of this aim.

The question of Trade Union Unity is the most vital and important problem of the international trade union movement at the present time. Trade union unity is particularly imperative today when the offensive of capital on the living standards of the working class is carried out all along the front, when fascism brings terror, slavery and starvation to the toilers and when imperialist war threatens them with new, unheard-of calamities. The capitalists wish to shift the burden of the crisis on to the shoulders of the working class and it is precisely because of this that unity of the trade union organizations and unity of action is now more imperative than ever.

The R. I. L. U. as a whole and its largest section, the trade unions of the U. S. S. R., are the most active supporters of a rapid and complete restoration of trade union unity in every country and on an international scale.

The attitude of the R. I. L. U.

towards the question of trade union unity in individual countries is fully reflected in the proposals which were and are made by the Unity General Confederation of Labor (C. G. T. U.) of France to the General Confederation of Labor (C. G. T.). This attitude of the C. G. T. U. met with the sympathy and support of not only all the revolutionary trade unions of France, but also of a number of large unions and federations, affiliated to the C. G. T., which declared for the methods and forms of restoring trade union unity, brought forward by the C. G. T. U. of France. Simultaneously with the C. G. T. U., other trade unions affiliated to the R. I. L. U. (Czechoslovakia, Spain, etc.) also raised the question of trade union unity.

Therefore, the decision of your Congress on the necessity for trade union unity has met sympathetic response among the broadest working masses and is bound to facilitate the organizational unification of the trade unions for the struggle against capital.

The R. I. L. U. Executive Bureau which fully consents to meet your wish half way believes that the program which met with the sympathy and support of the French working masses may be adopted as the basis for the restoration of trade union unity on an international scale. We consider that this platform of the unification of the world trade union movement should contain the following points:

1. Struggle against wage-cuts and for wage-increases.
 2. Struggle for social insurance, including non-contributory unemployment insurance.
 3. Struggle for the freedom of workers' organizations, for freedom of speech, assembly and workers' press.
 4. Struggle against fascism and the danger of a new imperialist war.
- Thus, class struggle against capital and for the immediate demands and general aims of the working class should serve as the basis for the organizational unification of the trade union movement.

The organizational unification of the Trade Unions affiliated to the Red International of Labour Unions and to the International Trade Union Federation, as well as those workers' trade unions which are outside of both the Internationals could, in the opinion of the R. I. L. U. and the trade unions of the U. S. S. R., be carried out in the following manner:

1. Amalgamation of parallel unions and elections of managements on the basis of proportional representation.
2. Inner trade union democracy, i.e., freedom of opinion and the right to defend one's views inside a unified trade union organization.
3. Discipline in the struggle against the capitalists.

An amalgamation of the parallel organizations on a national scale would be an important step forward along the road of building a unified Trade Union International on the basis of the class struggle.

This is the attitude of the R. I. L. U., as a whole, of the All-Union

Council of Trade Unions (V. Z. S. P. S.) and of other trade unions, affiliated to the R. I. L. U. towards the question of restoring international trade union unity.

The R. I. L. U. Executive Bureau is fully confident that the Norwegian Trade Union Federation will declare, in accordance with the decision of its last Congress, for the amalgamation of both Internationals and for the formation of a unified Trade Union International on the above-indicated basis.

This is a great and complicated question which requires a detailed discussion and therefore the R. I. L. U. proposes to meet with the representatives of your trade unions in order to discuss concretely the forms and methods of a joint struggle for unity of the international trade union movement.

Comradely yours,
EXECUTIVE BUREAU OF
THE RED INTERNATIONAL
OF LABOR UNIONS.
General Secretary of the
R. I. L. U.