

Trade Union Movement

The 10th All-India Trade Union Congress.

By Glyn Evans.

The action of the Reformists, in sabotaging strikes in India (Jute strike in Calcutta, and more especially the Bombay Textile strike) alienated workers from the trade unions controlled by the reformists. A large number of workers left the reformist unions and with masses of previously unorganised rallied to the militant **Red Flag Unions** which, led by the Workers and Peasants party conducted heroic battles against their class enemies.

The intense difference of opinion and different action taken in cases of Trade Union policy (reformist and revolutionary), came to a head at the **10th All-India Trade Union Congress, held at Nagpur Nov. 29th — Dec. 4th 1929.**

The Congress split, the reformists seceding from the Congress even before the open session began.

An indication of the feeling against the reformists was expressed when, on the arrival of **Joshi** and **Chamanlal** at Nagpur, they were greeted by a large number of delegates with hostile shouts. It is to be remembered that the Congress had sent an invitation to the Communist Party of Great Britain to send a fraternal delegate. **W. Gallacher** was elected by the Party but the British „Labour“ Government refused his passport.

At the Executive meeting prior to the open congress, the Vice-Chairman of the Reception Committee took objection to the „objectionable“ nature of the placards placed outside, and handed in his resignation. The placards bore the inscriptions „Down with Chamanlal“, „Down with Joshi“. **Deshpande** stated that he had placed them there.

The reports of the actual discussion and voting at the congress and the E. C. meeting prior to it have not yet appeared, but a further indication of the struggle between Reformists and revolutionary policy is given in the several statement made by various parties issued to the press after the Congress.

Ginwalla, a member of the Legislative council, in a statement, shows up the attempt of the reformists to restrict the voting power of the newly affiliated Red Flag Unions.

„The Girni Kamgar Union“ states Ginwalla „claimed a membership of 54,000 on the strength of the report in the credentials committee, consisting of Kulkarni, Shiva Rao, and Jawaharlal Nehru with Bakhale as Secretary. The Committee after a full discussion could not come to a unanimous conclusion. It, therefore, informed the E. C. about the three views of the members. Some recommended a membership of 25,000, others 40,000 and the third was for 50,000 . . . My motion for 40,000 membership was carried by the casting vote of Jawaharlal Nehru. **The right wing trade unionists wanted to give a normal membership of 6,000 to the Girni Kamgar Unions**, which is hardly fair, in view of the fact that even in the credentials committee the lowest membership recommended was 25,000. This would make no difference in the voting power of the G. K. U. on the E. C. council whether a nominal membership of 6,000 or a larger membership of 40,000 was given. In any event they were entitled to a membership of 4 members on the E. C.“

The **Whitley Commission** boycott was discussed. Ginwalla moved a resolution for the complete boycott of the Commission. He was supported by Kulkarni, Ruikar (Girni Kamgar Union and G. I. P. Railwaymen's union) and S. Chandra Bose.

M. Kanti Bose moved for conditional boycott, the conditions being, withdrawal of the Meerut case, the Public Safety Ordinance and the repeal of the Trades Dispute Act.

A resolution for complete, wholehearted cooperation with the Commission was supported by Shiva Rao, K. R. Choudhury, Joshi, Chamanlal and L. Hussain. After a heated discussion lasting five hours the vote was taken and complete

boycott resolution was carried by 53 to 41. Of the Bengal Unions, the newly affiliated Jute workers Unions and Lilloah Railway Union and the B. N. Railway Union voted for complete boycott. Following this vote a two hours discussion centred round a resolution moved by Deshpande, Secretary of the Girmi Kamgar Union for **affiliation to the Pan-Pacific Secretariat**. This resolution was carried.

Other resolutions agreed upon to be placed before the open Congress were, affiliation to the League Against Imperialism, the rejection of the proposal to hold an Asiatic Labour Conference; the refusal to send delegations to the future sessions of the International Labour Conferences of the League of Nations at Geneva; the re-appointment of the Worker's Welfare League of India as the agent of the All India T.U.C. in Britain (broken off at the instigation of Purcell and Hallsworth, the British T.U.C. delegates to the Congress in 1928) rejection of the proposal for a Round Table Conference and the condemnation of the Nehru Report. One of the most important resolutions passed at the E.C. — affiliation to the Pan-Pacific Secretariat — was withdrawn by Deshpande at the open session, 'in order' states Liberty 'to avoid a split'. The split had already occurred, before the open session of the Congress.

The open session was held in a huge Pandal; outside were hung huge placards with inscriptions, "Long live Revolution", "Remember your comrades at Meerut"; "Forget not the sacrifices of Jatin Das"; "Down with Imperialism"; "Youth of India stand for complete independence"; "Don't be deluded by Round Table Conferences" etc.

These slogans denote the politics which dominated the life of the Congress.

R. S. Rulkar, in his Chairman's speech, dealt with the repressive action of the Imperialist Government and the capitalist class in India, the Meerut Trial and the attempt to stifle the Girmi Kamgar Union by prohibiting meetings, etc. He attacked the Whitley Commission whose real object he states was to "undermine the solidarity of the Indian working class and to whitewash the repressive policy of the Government".

"He advocated a militant policy and put the question of 'Geneva or Moscow'. He plumped for Moscow. The Russian Revolution has been an event of great magnitude, the real character of which is not still understood by many of us".

He advocated the use of the General Strike as the only means of gaining complete independence.

Jawaharlal Nehru, made a Presidential speech of a Brockway-Maxton type. He condemned the capitalist system, roundly denounced the Whitley Commission. He said in relation to the Commission and the part the Labour Government plays in it: —

"Their (the Labour Government spokesmen) chief aim appears to prove to the world that they are as sober and respectable as those who are the inheritors of wealth. When Prime Minister MacDonald speaks in America or in Geneva is it the Socialist and the Pacifist that is speaking? He speaks as the representative of Imperialist England and Austin Chamberlain could be no fitter representative. Mr. Snowden at the Hague forgets his Socialism and stands for the prestige of "John Bull" and the glory of the Union Jack. The very triumphs of the Labour Government's policy, such as they are, are the triumphs of Imperialist policy."

He then dealt with British Labour Imperialist policy in China, Egypt and Palestine. The Labour Party in England under Mr. MacDonald's guidance, was the complacent partner of the Tory Party in their imperialist policy.

It was when dealing with international affiliations that Nehru tried to be the real statesman. Moscow at any cost must be tabooed. "If I may venture to suggest it would be best for us not to affiliate to either international." (2nd or 3rd.)

Of the 2nd. International, he said that the "occupancy of office in various countries, has made its leaders betray their principles and become the exponents of a new type of imperialism, Labour imperialism, which may not speak in the accents of the Tories, but which is none the less thorough. "To affiliate to Amsterdam would be disastrous to our cause". He followed by stating that he was an admirer of Soviet Russia and asked the Congress to ignore the threats held out to those who have had any connection with the Third International.

Still, he finds certain objections against the 3rd International and asked the Congress to "keep off the rocks", implying a centre way out, which is obviously impossible. "The Labour

movement is above all International. It seeks to build society on a cooperative basis".

The purport of his speech was to keep the Indian T.U.C. away from Moscow. In fact the R.I.L.U. was not mentioned by him though that would be the appropriate body to affiliate to, as the organisation built up upon an industrial basis, with the Third or Communist International giving the political leadership rather than the C.I. itself.

The prisoners at Meerut, all of them having close connection with the T.U.C. sent a telegram to the Congress. It was sent by Joglekar and 26 of the accused signed it headed by the veteran of the Trade Union movement in India, **D. R. Thengde**. The telegram is as follows: —

"Congratulations for the bold lead given by the Congress. Hope the E.C. will follow it up and force the powerful working class to the front. We emphatically condemn the definitely pro-capitalist move of Joshi, Chamanlal and Co. splitting the workers ranks by starting separate Federation as the price for membership of the Royal Commission."

Subhas Chandre Bose was elected President, Deshpande Secretary and Ginwalla Treasurer for the next year.

The Congress report suggests that Bose and Nehru are becoming revolutionary. The same might have been said after the British T.U.C. Congress at Scarborough in 1925, of Purcell, Hicks and Cook. We have seen what happened to Purcell and Co.

Driven by the mass struggle, Bose and Nehru are forced to take up a "left" pose; but as the crisis develops, Bose, Nehru and others will fail as utterly as have Purcell, Hicks and Cook. In India as in Britain the only leadership of the working class is the revolutionary leadership of the **Communist Party**.

THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

The Extraordinary Party Congress of the Labour Party of Iceland.

By B. J. (Reykjavik).

At the last Party Congress of the Icelandic Labour Party in 1928 it was decided to convene an extraordinary Party Congress for the end of 1929 which should deal with the trade union questions. The Communists had proposed to re-elect the delegates and to invite the numerous trade unions which were not affiliated to the Labour Party to participate in this Congress. This proposal was rejected by the social democratic party leadership.

In spite of this the number of Communist representatives was this time 10 as against 5 at the previous Congress. This larger representation was due to the fact that some trade unions have withdrawn their former social democratic representatives and replaced them by Communists. The social democratic leaders at first threatened to annul this election, but did not carry out their threat, as they wished to avoid a split in view of the approaching elections to the Althing (Parliament).

Since it assumed office in 1926 the reactionary peasant government has been supported by the social democrats, although the anti-labour policy of this government has become more and more obvious. It has considerably reduced wages, which in the State undertakings only amount to 40 to 60 per cent of the lowest wages paid in private industry. In spite of this the social democracy will not undertake anything against this government. It has, in collusion with the Conservative party, fixed the day of the elections to the Althing at a time when the majority of the workers are scattered over the whole country as a result of seasonal work, and therefore have no opportunity to go to the poll. The government also attempted to introduce a compulsory arbitration law, but had to abandon this attempt owing to the determined opposition it aroused.

When the question of coalition was discussed at the extraordinary Party Congress, the Communists exercised sharp criticism of the Party leadership, which was not without effect. They submitted a motion in which they demanded that support of the government by the social democrats be dependent on a number of conditions. The social democratic