

their industrial functions, he sabotaged the whole project so long as he was in office. The Party committee that had been appointed accomplished practically nothing. In 1922, at its Paris Congress, the Party took the matter up again and laid more elaborate plans for a national trade union committee, together with corresponding committees in all the national and local unions. Their function was to organize and propagate communism in the unions.

This action at once made the matter a burning issue in the C. G. T. U. The opposition, consisting of "pure" syndicalists, anarchists and Frossardists, made a wild protest. They declared that if the Communist Party were allowed to have such committees it would be the end of the trade union movement as such, for it would lose its independence and degenerate into merely an appendage of the hated Communist Party. They emphasized this issue as an argument against affiliating to the Red International of Labor Unions.

The matter came to a head in the Bourges, 1923, Congress of the C. G. T. U. By a strong majority, the Congress decided not only in favor of the R. I. L. U., but also to permit organized revolutionary propaganda within its ranks provided that the members of these nuclei would submit unquestionably to the decisions and discipline of the unions. The whole issue threatened to split the C. G. T. U.

But, after creating all this commotion, the trade union committees have not amounted to much. There is a national committee of 13 members (appointed by the Party) but they are not very active. There are also a few committees in the larger centers but they are not very active or well organized. Pierre Monatte, a veteran militant in the French labor movement, was one of the

three national secretaries of the trade union committee. He recently resigned and levelled a strong criticism at the whole system. In the pioneer land of organized trade union nuclei, the trade union committees are not making much headway.

#### The Triple Movement

All three of these movements—shop councils, shop nuclei, and trade union committees—are necessary to the labor movement. The shop councils are the basic organization industrially of the masses; the shop nuclei are the organized revolutionists within the shops and the shop councils, and the trade union committees are the organized revolutionary nuclei within the trade unions. They do not conflict with each other, but complement and complete the general revolutionary structure.

But France, like other countries, is finding out that it is a real task to learn the functions of these new forms and to adopt a balanced program with regard to them. At present there is a tendency towards a sort of faddism in the matter. Instead of following a broad policy which includes all three of the movements, each in its proper place, there is a tendency to favor one or another of the movements at the expense of the rest. In such a competition the trade union committees are not faring very well. They represent an old, tried, and homely movement and do not attract as much attention and service as the newer and more glittering shop councils and shop nuclei movements.

The working out of a real balanced program, with all three movements given their proper function and place, is, therefore, one of the most urgent needs now confronting the French labor movement. What is wanted is a comprehensive plan embracing at once the shop councils, shop nuclei, and trade union committees.

## Greetings to the Italian Daily!

The left wing unionists, indeed all revolutionary workers of America, will hail as another accomplishment of the Workers Party which will give tremendous assistance to the labor movement, the new Communist daily paper in the Italian language started this month in Chicago for general circulation throughout America. This new daily in Italian will greatly aid the militants, especially in

the needle trades, the textile and in the mining industries. Subscriptions outside Chicago are \$5 per year with special bundle rates for distribution at a cent and a half a copy. T. U. E. L. adherents who are in contact with Italian workers should make use of this new medium of education.

Address: *Il Lavoratore*, 1113 W. Washington Blvd., Chicago, Ill.

## Amalgamated Clothing Workers Resist Reaction

By Earl R. Browder

IN spite of all its defects, and they were many and serious, the Sixth Biennial Convention of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, held in Philadelphia, May 12th to 17th, stands out as the most encouraging event in the labor movement in recent days. A militant left-wing was present, defined its position and its program, and though defeated on all propositions but one by the centrist administration, consolidated its position and strengthened all progressive tendencies in the A. C. W. of A.

Every issue of consequence was between the left-wing on the one hand, and the combination of all other forces on the other. The right-wing reactionaries largely surrendered their identity in the convention, so that, although they received consolation in the seating of Local 2 delegation, they were immensely weakened. The policies of the administration having a progressive tendency, amalgamation, labor party, collaboration with the Russian workers, etc., were emphatically endorsed by the overwhelming sentiment of the convention. Black reaction, such as now reigns in the I. L. G. W. U., and which had also been stretching out its claws for the A. C. W. of A., was completely balked.

But if there is any reason for militants to be encouraged by this convention, this must not be allowed to obscure the defects—and even dangers—that were disclosed therein. Outstanding among these is the timidity of the administration on issues which demand decision and energetic action, while the main body of the membership is lulled into a feeling of security and contentment by the general atmosphere of progressive measures. Such a situation, if it were not for the presence of a fighting left-wing, would be exceedingly dangerous; and it is only by constant growth and development of the left that the continued welfare of the A. C. W. of A. can be guaranteed. This is illustrated by four principal struggles of the convention.

#### The Question of Local 2

Smell of battle was in the air, early in the convention, because every one knew that the seating of Local 2 delegation would raise the issue of recent occurrences in that organization, during which all sorts of irregularities took place in the struggle in which the right wing wrested control of the local offices.

The left-wing had demonstrated, by a great membership meeting, that the control by the right was artificial, and therefore contested the delegation, whose election had been accomplished by violence and illegal removal of names from the ballot.

Report on Local 2, from the credentials committee, was delayed until after the case of Local 5 had been decided. In the latter, it was evidently an artificial protest, brought to offset the contest of Local 2 by the left. The administration gave the decision to the properly elected left-wingers—palpably a maneuver, the whole thing, to help cover the injustice done later in seating the illegally elected Local 2 delegation.

When the committee recommended seating the delegates of the right-wing, the whole matter of their elections as delegates was aired in the convention. The right-wing did not attempt to refute the charges made. A general denial for the record was considered enough, and the real plea made was to "preserve the reputation of the union." The administration threw its vote to the right-wing, although President Hillman disavowed both sides and made no commitment on the issue. The vote was 171 combined right-wing and administration, and 89 left-wing votes. This left-wing strength stood solid throughout the convention, and at one time swelled into a majority. It was the first registration of the left in the A. C. W. of A. as a whole.

In this battle the delegates of the New York cutters' union were the center and militant factor of the right-wing. By their tactics they soon had the whole convention noting them. Rumors were rife of threats on their part to stage disruptive demonstrations, as their means of bringing pressure to bear upon the administration votes. They got the votes and seated the Local 2 delegates, but the whole incident did more to destroy the right-wing prestige than all the left-wing propaganda could have done. It was the only time that the right showed its own face.

#### The Issue of Week Work

A resolution calling for the establishment of week-work in all markets, as against piece-work or standards of production, was another crucial point in the convention. The New York market has week-work, established through many battles, while other systems rule

in other centers. The administration proposed that the issue be left for settlement in each market according to conditions and the desires of the membership in each place.

The left-wing was, of course, the militant champion of week-work. It battled solidly for this measure, which is one of burning interest to the rank and file. The right-wing, which finds its principal strength in New York, felt that it did not dare champion piece work, even though they are known generally to favor it, because of strong rank and file opposition. A few even spoke for the week-work resolution. The administration was in a delicate position, for if the right-wing had, against its convictions but yielding to the pressure of the New York membership, voted for week-work, it would undoubtedly have been carried over the administration's protest. But most of the right-wing did not vote at all, 51 delegates absenting themselves or abstaining, so the administration measure was carried by a vote of 131 to 99.

#### June 17th Versus July 4th

Participation in political action in this election year came up in a large number of resolutions calling upon the convention to endorse the June 17th, St. Paul, Farmer-Labor Party gathering, to send delegates, and advise local unions and joint boards to be also represented. The administration on this issue took a typical centrist, middle-of-the-road position; it proposed to send delegates to June 17th and also to July 4th at Cleveland, pledged to work for the formation of a class farmer-labor party that would unite all the independent political forces of labor. Discussion on this issue was sharp but short; the question had been maneuvered to near the end of a session, so that the delegates were impatient to adjourn. Participation in both conventions was approved by a *viva-voce* vote which indicated about the usual division of 2 to 1. Both reports before the convention, however, committed the A. C. W. of A. to participation in a farmer-labor party and to fight for its formation, so that the decision was thus far unanimous.

#### Proportional Representation

The fourth battle of special significance was on the issue of proportional representation on joint boards. At present many joint boards have equal number of delegates from each union, regardless of size. This is the basis of much bureaucratic control which is the especial heart's-desire of the right-wing. The left-wing proposed a referendum to the membership,

establishing a rule of proportional representation in every market, with the recommendation of the convention that it be adopted. On this issue the administration was really neutral—at least in speech and vote, wherever its sympathies may have been. The left-wing added 23 votes to its solid 89, and, with the rest of the center group not voting, carried its proposition over the right-wing, by a vote of 112 to 71. It was the only clear-cut left-wing issue that won a definite victory in the convention and the only immediate achievement of a definite nature.

#### Relation of Forces in the A. C. W. of A.

Analysis of the votes cast on the four issues mentioned, will show that the numerical relation of forces of center group, left, and right-wings is expressed approximately as 121, 89, and 71. Of these groups the center is the broadest, but is less definite and clear-cut than either of the others, and owes its strength largely to the skillful piloting of Sydney Hillman, who dominates it completely. The right-wing is small, growing smaller, and has a very narrow base, relying largely upon the survival of craft spirit among the New York cutters who occupy a strategic position in the industry. The left-wing has assumed larger volume than the right, and in addition has a broad base in the organization, including all language groups and all trade sections of the industry.

It will be readily apparent that the left, as organized and led by the Trade Union Educational League and the Workers Party, has by its militant and aggressive championship of the most vital needs of the needle workers, by its clarification of its position and program, grasped the attention of the entire industry. It has prepared the way for a great and solid growth of power and influence. At the same time it has assumed a responsible and sober attitude toward organizational matters that augurs well for its ability to hold and consolidate its growing influence. It was significant that one of the most effective speeches for standardizing dues payments, bringing up the dues of many centers to the standard of Chicago, \$2.00 per month, was made by a left-wing militant, in the face of a demagogic appeal to the interests of the poor rank and file by the right-wing. Its clear-cut and militant program, its growing definiteness of organizational connections, its responsible attitude toward the union generally, and the rapidly-growing confidence of the rank and file—these are the great attainments of the left-wing in the A. C. W. of A. during the past two years, and they were registered at this convention so that all the world could

see. This is the most important achievement in the clothing industry, not alone from the point of view of revolutionary progress, but also for the healthy growth and development of the union itself and the everyday struggle for better conditions.

In the arid desert of the American labor movement, where conventions as a rule are more reactionary than chambers of commerce or bourgeois clubs, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America brings a refreshing breeze of proletarian spirit. True enough, it has some of the poison of class collaboration in its veins, its 'progressive' administration is often sadly indecisive and yielding under pressure from the right-wing, and only by the con-

stant prodding of all the militant elements among the rank and file can it be kept steadily going forward. But, after all the necessary criticism has been made (and the sharpest criticism may be the most friendly act, when its good faith is recognized) the Amalgamated has again shown that it deserves its reputation as the leading labor union of America. May the left-wing militants combine more strongly, develop their programs more clearly, participate ever more actively in the left of their union, that the present healthy condition may be made the starting point for more radical, lasting, and profound achievements in the clothing industry.

## Madmen Control the I. L. G. W. U.

THE seventeenth convention of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, meeting in Boston, May 5th to 17th, marked the 25th year of that organization's history. It might have been a great event in the forward march of the union, where the victories and defeats of the past should be reviewed, the structure and policies of the union remodeled and brought up to date to achieve more solidarity, effectiveness, and fighting spirit, and the whole organization renewed in its enthusiasm and hopefulness. Not so with this convention.

A grievous wound, striking into the very vitals of the I. L. G. W. U., was the outstanding result of the Boston convention, instead of the constructive progress that might have been achieved. Like mad dervishes of the Orient, the organization, under the control of a set of irresponsible ignoramuses, lacerated its own body, and cut into its most vital organ—the militant rank and file workers who for decades have struggled and sacrificed to make the I. L. G. W. U. a strong and powerful union. The expulsion of hundreds of the most loyal and active members was approved in Boston.

Blind fanaticism could go no further than the exclusion of such tried union fighters as those who were expelled from the union, victims of the insanity of the *Forwards* gang in control. All of these people are known throughout the industry, by the rank and file, for their services and sacrifices. Some of the expelled went to the convention to appeal their expulsion, leaving the direction of the strike work, which had been placed in their hands on demand of the workers involved in spite of their exclusion from the union. They are good enough to do the work for which no others so well-fitted were available, but they are not

allowed to hold membership and vote. It is hard to realize the enormity of the crime against the working class that is summed up in these expulsions confirmed at Boston. Words are pale and lifeless things. The disgust, contempt, resentment, anger, and indignation that is aroused in the breast of every thinking worker in the garment industry is beyond measure or expression.

How was such a monstrous crime possible? Does the membership of the I. L. G. W. U. sanction this self-mutilation of the union?

No, the rank and file is not guilty of this crime. It is possible only because a gang of cynical, small-minded, and ignorant men, tools of a private institution, the *Daily Forward* and Abe Cahan, which is determined to rule the Jewish workers for the benefit of its income from advertisers, found themselves temporarily in control. They became drunk with their power. They determined that they would never give it up. To preserve and perpetuate their control it was necessary to silence all opposition.

The result of such a determination was the expulsion policy launched last year. The fruit and flower of it is seen in the Boston Convention. Tens of thousands of members were disfranchised in the elections to the convention, by the expulsion or ruling off the ballot of all left-wingers. Then at the convention 16 delegates in opposition to the destructive policy, elected in spite of the terrorization of the membership against them, were unseated from the convention. Even then, the fifty-odd delegates who still remained and voted against the insane gang in control, represented more members than those who were in the pockets of Sigman & Co.