The Struggle in the Needle Trades
By W. Z. Foster

The sharpest point in the class struggle at the present time in the United States is in the needle trades. There the fight is intense. It is marked by unprecedented mass movements of the Left Wing leadership of the workers against the bosses and the treacherous right wing Socialist trade union officials. The center of the struggle now is the bitter fight of the Left Wing against the bureaucrat leadership of the workers, the treacherous right wing officials of the Socialist Labor Party of America, the tail-end officials of the American Federation of Labor, and against the old Gompers’ racketeers. This is the great struggle between the Left Wing and the treacherous right wing officials of the Socialist labor movement for control of the trade unions. The Left Wing is fighting to prevent the bureaucrat leadership of the trade unions from carrying out the famous reorganization program of the employers, has introduced and is now putting into effect in various branches of the needle trades the infamous reorganization plan of the employers. The Left Wing is fighting to prevent the bureaucrat leadership of the trade unions from carrying out the infamous reorganization program of the employers.

The Growth of Company Unions.
Fifteen years ago, the policy of American employers, especially in the cotton and steel industries, was one of a cooperative policy, that is, of permitting the workers some kind of organization whatever among the workers. About 1912, however, they began to depart from this policy by organization the trade unions, the first important one of which was established by the Colorado Coal and Iron Company upon the conclusion of the historic Colorado miners’ strike. This was the earliest example of the company-unionizing policy on the part of the employers. Where they previously per- mitted no organizations whatever among their workers, they now set up so-called unions entirely controlled by the companies.

Company unions are a product of the efficiency campaign of the employers to increase the productivity of the workers and to hold the workers into passive subjection to the most intense capitalist exploitation. Their specific purpose is to accelerate the growth of the workers in industry. 2. To prevent the growth of class-consciousness among the workers by the systematic cultivation of class-collaboration ideas.

Company-Unionizing the Trade Unions.
Advancing on the basis of their goal of establishing working-class organizations which facilitate the introduction of speed-up systems in industry and the growth of class-consciousness and trade unionism, the employers are pursuing the policy not only of establishing company unions outright, but also of systematically degenerating the union leaderships, and directing the workers into the direction of company unionism. In the latter course they are assisted by the surrender policy adopted by the reactionary trade union bureaucracy especially after the heavy defeats suffered in the last few years by the trade unions. The bureaucrats, with their own self-interest in mind, are perfectly willing to sacrifice the interests of the masses in return for the workers, to prevent them from establishing the mass organizations that they need to facilitate the speed-up. They thereby, that the employers will permit them to have at least some form of organization to collect dues from. But in return, they will do fascist service for the employers and try to force the workers to accept the most unjust exploitation.

Immediately after the war, the employers delivered a series of heavy blows against the trade unions. The climax of this struggle was the national strike of the railroad shopmen in 1922. Because of the treachery of the railroad union leaders, this historic strike resulted in an overwhelming defeat for the unions. It broke the backbone of railroad unionism.

The reactionary trade union leaders of the whole movement, who had no taste for these great struggles, collapsed in a great wave of defeat. They failed to carry the trade unions through the struggle. They are the leaders in the struggle against the left wing, among the leaders who sponsored and helped to establish the infamous reorganization program of the employers, and who are the leaders in the struggle against the left wing, among the leaders who have abandoned the mass strikes of the trade union leaders, the leaders who have reduced the trade unions to a passive support of the employers. The Left Wing has been the outstanding champion of this principle to build the trade unions.

Company unionism puts forward class collaboration as a substitute for class struggle. The bureaucrats in the needle industry are still strong enough to be defeated. Their policy is one of conciliation and arbitration. They accept whatever forms of organization the workers present to them. They are in full harmony with the leaders of the American Federation of Labor, to strip the unions of their fighting qualities, and to commit the trade unions to co-operate with the employers in exploiting the workers.

Like the rest of the reactionary bureaucrat, the Socialist State union leaders, are too strong to be defeated. Their policy is one of conciliation and arbitration. They accept whatever forms of organization the workers present to them. They are in full harmony with the leaders of the American Federation of Labor, to strip the unions of their fighting qualities, and to commit the trade unions to co-operate with the employers in exploiting the workers.

The New York Cloakmakers’ Strike.
The central issue of the strike of the 55,000 New York cloakmakers, which has kept that industry tied up for the last six months, is the demand of the employers for the right to 10 per cent per year reorganization of their shops. Under this plan of reorganization the employers would have the right to discharge 10 per cent of their workers each year. The strike is the mass resistance to this arbitrary demand.

The reorganization plan of the employers is entirely in line with the general policy of the trade union leaders. When they secure the right to fire 10 per cent of their workers for no specified reasons, they hold a tremendous advantage over the workers, and gain nothing by it. But the workers can mobilize the workers in various ways. They can speed them up, with the implied threat that all those workers who do not work fast enough will be discharged when the reorganization takes place. They can send them to work, with the implied threat that all those workers who do not work fast enough will be discharged when the reorganization takes place. They can speed them up, with the implied threat that all those workers who do not work fast enough will be discharged when the reorganization takes place. They can also invite the more militant-minded workers on the grounds. They can systematically undermine the union leaders in the trade unions, and to develop them into real fighting organizations.

As is the case in every industry where the employees come forward with their program to democratize the trade unions, the right wing leadership strongly supported the reorganization plan of the employers. The Left Wing, on the other hand, met it with the worst possible resistance, mobilizing the workers for struggle against it. The right wing leaders joined the employers in co-operation with the employers to put the reorganization into effect in spite of the opposition of the left wing and the broad mass movement.

The efforts of the cloak bosses and the right wing bureaucrats to force reorganization upon the New York cloakmakers, has been the most recent chapter in the history of the American labor movement. From the beginning it has been a strike-breaking enterprise. When the government's commissioner recommended that the reorganization be put into effect in the cloak industry, the
Peasantry or Power

By J. Louis Engdahl

The title of this article is not original. It was used very recently by one of the speakers, Prof. Macy Campbell, head of the department of rural education, Iowa State Teachers' College, as the subject of his address before the Eighth Annual Meeting of the American Farm Bureau Federation in Chicago. It shows remarkably the word "peasantry" could be the line along which the American farmer is thinking. Especially in view of the fact that the town farmers are the richest per capita in the nation.

"Peasantry" to the American farmer means mortgage foreclosures, tenancy, crop farming, the low state of the tiller of the soil when he can take all his belongings, including his family, in his rickety Ford dives and wander seeking the service of a serf that is in the gift of some rapacious landlord.

The word "peasantry" has not long been on the tongue of the American farmer. It is only since the war that this word has crept into his vocabulary, with every indication, however, that it is going to stay there. The farmers' political awakening, especially in the cotton belts, is the biggest issue before the presidential election in November, 1928. As the farmer plunges toward peasantry, his problem challenges the common attention of all, more and more, and especially of the city worker who should be the natural ally of the farmer on the land.

The Changing Order.

The whole continent, for centuries, has stretched westward before the American farmer. There has been plenty of rich free land sought out by the hardest elements of the American population, the pioneer moving toward the setting sun. The world's most intricate network of railroads has been laid down and placed at his disposal, to be sure, but at what heavy toll is being revealed daily in new agonies imposed on the nation's farm population. Producers and consumers co-operatives offer little help.

Great trusts in transportation, term implement manufacturers, control of buying and selling of the products of the fields, and above all, in money, hold the farmers helpless in their grip. The farmer on the land, like the wage worker in industry, becomes more and more the human element in production for profit, victim of all the super-cortures that capitalism inflict.

Millions Seek an Escape.

Millions seek an escape thru flight to the cities where they arrive, bankrupt and penniless, to become the competitors in industry of the city workers. The very fact that crops are large after a abundant harvest, of the forces dragged down below the cost of production, resulting in the inevitable bankruptcy, or the mortgage that leads as a first step toward the same goal.

Scott Nearing, the economist, following a tour to the Pacific coast declares that, "In the southwestern states the radical tenant farmers are not even picking their landlord's cotton. They did not pick them in 1928, or 1929. If they did they would get all. In stead, they hire out to pick for the landlord on adjacent farms. In the state of Arizona one husband gets wages." But he also falls from his more favored position of tenant farmer into that of farm worker, or merely another "hired hand".

Percentage of Landless Farms.

According to the United States census, each passing decade has seen an increase in the percentage of landless tenant farmers. In 1859 it was 26 per cent; in 1900 it was 52 per cent; in 1926 it was 58 per cent. Seven states have almost reached the 50 per cent mark and in two, more than 50 per cent of the farmers are now landless.

But the Farmer Grows Poorer.

In spite of these vast advantages and the colossal sums measuring the total value of wealth produced, the American farmer is growing steadily poorer. He is the victim of the capitalist social order under which he lives and which takes its toll of profiteering on every hand. Arrive as he may, often forcing his children and wife to toil unluxuriously, and especially of the city worker who should be the natural ally of the farmer on the land.