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Amalgamation

Jay Fox

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by
Jay Fox

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The Trade Union Educational League is in no sense a dual union, nor is it affiliated with any such organization. It is purely an educational body of militants within existing mass unions, who are seeking through the application of modern methods to bring the policies and structure of the labor movement into harmony with present day economic conditions. It bespeaks the active cooperation of all militant union workers. For further details apply to the

**Trade Union Educational
League**

106 North La Salle Street, Chicago

AMALGAMATION

By Jay Fox

CHAPTER I.

THE GROWING POWER OF CAPITALISM

IN a really civilized society there would be no conflicting economic interests. There would be neither master nor slave, employer nor employee, rich nor poor. Where these distinctions exist civilization is merely a name, for there is bitter conflict between the rich employers and the wealthless workers; and this conflict increases in intensity in exact ratio to the concentration of wealth and power on the one hand and the corresponding increase of poverty and knowledge on the other. This conflict of interests in society has come to be known as the class struggle.

This war of the classes has raged throughout the ages. It is not a spectacular war, not always have the participants even been conscious of their parts in it. It is nevertheless universal and bitter, and all play their parts in it. It is the real perpetual World War out of which all other wars have sprung. The class war will not end by one party defeating the other. Labor defeated will rise again. Capital licked will make terms and resume the exploitation of Labor. The class struggle will end when the causes that give rise to it are removed. The economic structure of society must be remodeled before the basis for a real civilization can be laid. That is the work of Labor organized in its unions and equipped with the necessary knowledge. Armed with knowledge and power, Labor will change the economic basis of our common life and establish justice and equality where exploitation and misery now reign supreme.

THE FREE AMERICAN WORKERS

According to the moral ethics of our capitalist society the owners of the means of life are under no obligation to see that their fellow beings, who do not possess such means, are provided with the opportunity to make a living. When the capitalist cannot make profits out of the labor of the workers he turns them out, cuts off their source of bread without the least compunction. They may starve to death for all he cares. He is not their keeper except while they keep him in fat dividends. When he needs more help he makes the announcement at the factory gate where there are plenty of free Americans anxiously waiting to serve him. They are free Americans—they cost him nothing. That is the only sense in which Americans are free today.

While differing in many respects from previous forms of exploitation, capitalism is no less cruel and merciless. The capitalists own the means by which we live and thus we are at their mercy in no less degree than were our ancestors in the days of chattel slavery. The kings of old ruled the world with an iron hand, but they had a much smaller world to command than the Industrial Monarchs of today. The wealth of America exceeds that of the entire ancient world, and a few brainy men in New York City control the bulk of it; as cold and unscrupulous a set of men as ever dictated the policies of a nation.

The rulers of old hired thugs to pursue and capture their enemies, had them slugged and cast into prison, framed up evidence and put them through farcical trials before fixed judges who condemned them to imprisonment or death as the order was given above. Wherein does the practice of today differ from that, with the history of Labor's desperate struggles against the armed hirelings of Capital and the slaughter of men, women, and children in the great strikes at Pittsburgh in 1877; and later conflicts in Homestead, Chicago, Lattimer, Cripple Creek, Ludlow, Michigan, West Virginia, and numerous other places where the ruthless slaughter of workers was looked upon as merely a matter of business? To pursue the analogy further we might glance over the list of recent trials of a socio-political nature where social heretics have been brought before the courts and convicted on perjured evidence and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment by hand picked judges. The jails of the country contains hundreds of such victims, martyrs to the cause of humanity, men and women who dreamed of a better life than that which capitalism pro-

vides. Modern capitalism leaves a trail behind it as bloody as that of its predecessors and a record of cruelty and injustice just as black.

THE BEGINNING OF CAPITALISM

Modern capitalism had its beginning with the discovery of steam power and the invention of machinery. Before the advent of machinery the workers owned their hand tools and worked mostly in their own homes. The development of machinery soon left the hand workers without employment and they had to seek work from the capitalists who owned the costly machinery. Thus they became dependent upon the employers, who were not slow to take advantage of their new-born power. Spurred on by visions of wealth and affluence the new capitalists began at once to exploit Labor to the limit. Without organization, the helpless workers were compelled to labor sixteen hours a day.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century factory workers had to be on the job at 4 A. M. and work until dark for a wage that was a mere pittance. A first class mechanic got 50c a day. Laborers worked for three and four dollars a month and board. Women toiled in the cotton mills from dawn till dark for \$1.50 a week. The cost of food was not low in proportion to wages. Wheat was \$2.10 a bushel, corn 75c a bushel. Pork sold for 20c a pound and bread was 8c a loaf. Thus it will be seen that as an exploiter of labor, capitalism made a good beginning, and the precedent then established has been loyally adhered to ever since. Every atom of energy that Labor possessed has been coined into dollars, and we have today the doubtful distinction of being the richest country in the world, while millions of our workers are without the means of life.

The modern factory is an evolution, a growth, an amalgamation of individual craft shops into great industrial units. When capitalism was young and inexperienced every trade had its separate existence and its separate owner, and each owner and employer was the keen competitor of every other man in his line of work. In those days competition was said to be the "life of trade," the incentive to capacity production without which men would stagnate and deteriorate. However, modern capitalists have discovered the utter fallacy of that idea, and have discarded it after suffering tremendous losses through its ruinous application. But they still believe in it for working people, however, and insist most emphatically upon the application of its principles in their

factories by the crushing of unionism amongst the workers. The policy of every man for himself and to hell with the hindmost is held to be the ideal condition for the workers. As for themselves, the capitalists prefer the communistic idea of getting together into a compact organization.

INDUSTRIAL UNIONS OF THE CAPITALISTS

The first stage of the capitalists' getting together came when they discovered the economy and efficiency of the industrial factory. In the manufacture of a machine the products of several trades are necessary: draftsmen, patternmakers, moulders, blacksmiths, machinists, etc. Why not gather all these crafts together under one roof and one management? The idea was ideal from every viewpoint. It was adopted, and the industrial factory was born. Capitalists have always been quick to adopt new and valuable ideas. Therein lies their success. The workers, on the contrary, are suspicious of new ideas and slow to approach them. This accounts for the fact that after nearly a century of capitalist success in the application of the industrial idea the workers still adhere to the primitive craft union form of organization, although it is carrying them to destruction day by day.

The industrial factory was soon followed by the industrial corporation, which is really an industrial union of dollars. It was necessary that the small craft owner, displaced by the industrial factory, be taken into the industrial union, so the joint stock company was created. This was a most important development in the evolution of modern capitalism. In the early stages when capital was scarce it made it possible for people with small means to become share-holders in big corporations. Thus the industrial managers were given access to large amounts of money necessary to the success of their dreams of industrial conquest.

Under this system gigantic corporations were formed which gave their managers almost unlimited power over the workers in their employ and all others who came within the sphere of their influence. For it is a truism that a capitalist's power is measured by the amount of capital he controls, and that the men who control capital, control the means by which the people live. All opposition to the will of the new industrial monarchs has been ruthlessly crushed. The craft unions were the first to get the sword. The unions, still in their primitive form, became an easy prey for the big corporations. Not only did these refuse to recognize the unions but they ferreted out the union

men that were working under cover and discharged them. When goaded to the limit of their endurance by the soulless corporations the workers struck. A private army recruited by the bosses from among the criminals and thugs of the slums and fully equipped with modern implements of murder was let loose upon them with orders to kill. Police, militia, and mounted cossacks were generally on hand to help the private gunmen terrorize the workers and drive them back to their slavery.

CAPITALISM CONTROLS THE GOVERNMENT

Not satisfied with their domination of local political and commercial life, where they are absolute masters despite our democratic form of government, the industrial monarchs have succeeded in corrupting our State and National Governments, over which they hold sway as absolute as any monarch that ever ruled the ancient world. A hundred years ago it was said by the wisest students of social economy that under our "democratic" form of government it would be impossible for a group of rich men to get control of the government. Time has shown that little is impossible to the possessors of wealth. Men without wealth succumb to its influence. Lofty principles are fine but they don't supply their champions with the necessities and comforts of life. The masses without organization and economic education are misled by the press, to vote for the men selected by the money power. All politicians seek to curry favor with the capitalists who have the money to reward them. The politics of this republic are run by men who have made politics a profession, a means of gaining a livelihood, and their ethical code is so elastic it permits them to accept money from whatever source it happens to come. This is because the interests of the capitalists are served in every branch of the government. To all intents and purposes the Government of the United States is a branch of the associated industries. Whatever the industrial monarchs desire it to do, it does; even to the plunging of the people into a bloody war. An illuminating commentary on our democratic form of government is the fact that in every presidential election since 1860 the successful candidate has been the one with the largest campaign fund—furnished by the masters of industry.

Likewise the control of our educational institutions has passed into the hands of the industrial monarchs. Every university in the country is ruled absolutely by the corporations who furnish the funds, for its upkeep and expansion, and they see to it that nothing is taught

which might lead the students to suspect that the present industrial system is less than 100% perfect. The teacher who dares to hint at any social heresy knows his fate. Nothing but the approved brand of canned learning is taught and the student who emerges after three or four years of cramming is generally a full fledged plutocrat and snob, despising working people as lowbrow servers.

Nor do the children of the working people escape the polluting influence of plutocracy. The school books are published by the book trust. The state makes the rules governing the schools. In the country districts we are permitted to elect the school boards, but they have nothing to do with the education of the children except to hire the teachers and do the janitor work. In the cities there are no working men on the school boards. Bankers and business men oversee the education of the worker's children. As a result it often happens that children learn to despise the proletarian ideas of their parents.

Even the church is not immune to the poison of capitalism. Nowhere do we hear it raising its heavenly voice against the rapacity of the money power. On the contrary, it almost universally looks upon criticism of capitalism as heresy; and the clergyman who has the temerity to espouse the cause of Labor will soon find himself without a pulpit. If the founder of Christianity were to come amongst us today and preach a sermon such as he delivered when in the flesh, he would be arrested under the criminal syndicalist law and sent to prison for a term of years. Like all other institutions the church is subject to its source of income. It has its function to fulfill in the system, and the exploiters of the people furnish the funds to pervert it from its normal course. To capitalism nothing is sacred but itself. Its motto is: "Only the Servers Shall Survive."

But of all the institutions that have come under the sway of capitalism, the press is by far the worst enemy of the people. This is because it is the great avenue for the distribution of news. It comes into daily contact with the people and subtly poisons their minds against all ideas of change. It thus tends to keep them in perpetual bondage to the plutocracy. It is the moulder of public opinion and the chief avenue of propaganda for the powers that be—it is the mouthpiece of money. In return for this servility it receives the advertising patronage of big business, without which it could not exist. Obviously the press has full liberty to wield its scurrilous pen to the limit in attacking working people who refuse to accept the capitalist system as heaven-sent, and it is common knowledge that it takes full advantage of every strike and other expression of dis-

content with things as they are, to malign the toilers and to incite police and mob violence against them. But the workers have not the same freedom to reply. Special laws have been devised by the henchmen of capital in control of the "people's" government for the suppression of the people's press and the punishment of editors and speakers who have the hardihood to expose the rottenness of the capitalist system and advocate a change. Freedom of speech no longer exists in this country because the people have no control over the government. It is now the pliant tool of the plutocrats, doing their strong-arm work in return for campaign funds and other forms of graft. Capitalism is master of the world today.

CHAPTER II.

THE INCAPACITY OF CRAFT UNIONISM

UNIONS of workmen have existed from the earliest times. Solomon's temple was a union job. Imperial Rome went down before the sword of the "barbarians" after its corrupt and greedy plutocracy, composing only 2% of the population, had gobbled up all wealth of the vast empire and reduced its workers to chattel slavery, a climax towards which our own empire builders are heading with hastening steps. During the middle ages the union workers lived and worked in their own homes, each craft occupying a separate section of the walled cities. The unions were known as guilds and included employers and workers. In those days employers were themselves workers and never employed more than a few men and apprentices.

The modern craft union, composed of workers only, is a product of capitalism. As the employers became rich and the number of their employees became large the clash of economic interests were intensified. Then the workers began to see that their interests were not identical with the interests of the employers. So they withdrew from the guilds and formed their own organizations. In our times ignorant and designing men in the labor movement have preached the false doctrine of the identity of interest between Labor and Capital. But the increase of wealth and power at the command of Capital and its ruthless grinding down of Labor has made it perfectly plain to the vast majority of workers that the assertion is a vicious lie designed to mislead the toilers and keep them in perpetual bondage to the employing class.

The craft union was the natural starting point for the organization of Labor. When unionism was young there were no industries as we have them today and the industrial trust wasn't even a dream. Shops were small and far between, and each shop employed one kind of tradesmen only. Men who worked at the same trade, having interests in common, were bound sooner or later to combine the conservation of those interests in a union. The craft union grew out of the need of the tradesmen to protect their economic interests against the aggressions of the employers.

The workers learned from observation that when a part of the crew quit, the boss was greatly hampered in the operation of the shop

while seeking other help. From this they deduced that if the entire crew quit the boss would be up against it for a time at least, and that if the men hung around the shop and used their persuasive powers upon the men who came to take their places, he might have considerable difficulty in getting started, and in the meantime he would lose trade and probably his entire business. Thus was evolved an economic weapon of the highest importance, perhaps the greatest proletarian discovery of all ages—the *strike*. The strike is the principal weapon of consequence that the workers have at their command in the every-day struggle with which to resist the attacks of the employers and improve their working conditions. That they have not taken full advantage of this very effective weapon we shall see during the course of this discussion.

CRAFT UNIONS FALL BEHIND

So long as industry remained in its primitive state the craft union was able to cope with the employers who were weak and without organization. Gradually, however, they accumulated more and more wealth, combined their capital and their factories into larger industrial units, thus laying the foundation for the great trusts that now dominate industry. They followed this up by the formation of employers' associations in the different industries, which were really industrial unions of capitalists for the purpose of controlling output and prices, and for fighting the unions. It was then we first heard of the "open shop" and the campaign for the "freedom" of Labor.

Within a short time the whole face of industry was changed. The primitive shop had been absorbed into the industrial factory, eliminating the individual owners. Gigantic industrial corporations with billions of dollars at their command became the masters of industry, dictating the price of commodities, the wages of Labor and the policy of our State and National Governments. While the captains of industry were creating these great industrial combinations what were the leaders of Labor doing? Not a thing except to draw down their fat salaries, and they never failed in that.

The startling revolutionary change in the organization of industry made it absolutely essential that a similar change be made in the structure of our labor unions. Movement is life. The person or the institution that does not move dies. The American labor movement has not changed to keep pace with industrial evolution and therefore is doomed unless it awakens from its torpor very soon. It was formed

to fight primitive craft capitalism. It now faces modern giant industrial capitalism, before which its antiquated tactics are as a straw in the wind.

The way to fight machine guns is with machine guns or better. Only an idiot would go up against a machine gun with a bow and arrow. Yet our Labor Generals have been leading their bow-and-arrow craft-union batallions against the industrial machine guns of capitalism with disastrous results—defeat after defeat, strike after strike lost, wages slashed right and left, and the unions in retreat before the onslaughts of capital. Such downright incompetency, such dastardly betrayal of the workers has no parallel in history. If our labor leaders had a twentieth of the brains, daring, and enterprise of the leaders of capital we would have a union movement that could at least put up a defensive fight. No suggestion of improvement in our trade union tactics, no hint even that there is anything wrong in our system of organization, has issued from the lips of our inane leaders. They are utterly helpless in the face of the enemy.

In other capitalistic countries the union movement is in the process of readjusting itself to meet the changed industrial development. The European labor movement is far more progressive than ours and its leadership has life and energy and initiative. It is not afraid of change. It knows that its only hope lies in new tactics. It is fully aware that craft unionism is out of date and must be replaced by a more powerful form of organization that will function industrially. It has learned from its defeats. In every way the European labor movement, despite its faults, is far in advance of ours. It is more progressive; it has a much larger membership; it has vastly more shop control; and it recognizes the basic economic fact that it represents, not a section of society seeking to improve conditions by petty reforms, but a sharply defined economic slave class fighting for its life and liberty against a powerful master class determined to suppress with the iron heel every aspiration of the workers.

WHY ARE OUR UNIONS WEAK?

When we come to seek the cause why the American labor movement is so reactionary it will be well for us to first learn what is the main element that makes a union movement progressive. Who is it that is forever preaching progress and kicking over the old outworn institutions? Why, the rebel, of course! He is the busybody that is perpetually hammering at us to "can" our 19th-century ideas and at-

tach ourselves to those that are new and up to date; he it is who shocks and shames us into abandoning grand-fathery ideas that are a hindrance to our progress, but that we cherish because we were brought up with them. Nowhere is the revolutionist a greater menace to old-fogy ideas and practices than in the union. The union is his stronghold because there he is up against practical problems that call for solution by the most advanced methods. Now, when the radical deserts the union and goes off by himself we can readily imagine what happens. Lacking the stimuli to progress, it reverts back to old ideas and stagnates in them. That is what has happened to the American labor movement, and this is how it came about:

About thirty years ago the revolutionaries got the idea that they could make greater progress by withdrawing from the old unions and starting unions with radical programs. Headed by Daniel De Leon, who wasn't a worker but a college professor, the revolutionaries went off by themselves and started the Socialist Trades and Labor Alliance, a supposedly correct union believed to answer all the requirements of the social revolution. Its theory was a success except in the getting of members. When the rebels quit them, all progress stopped in the unions. In thirty years we have hardly advanced an inch. In other countries the workers have kept abreast of the times. They have the revolutionist amongst them, they have been there all the time. Only here have they deserted the unions and left them to their fate in the hands of reactionary leaders.

De Leon and his followers deduced a theory from somewhere that the unions were not susceptible to the ordinary laws of evolution. They avowed the unions could no more change their policies and constitutions than the leopard could change his spots. Acting upon this theory, they whooped it up for the new union, but nobody joined it except themselves. All their good radical energy was wasted on that child of the professor's brain, energy that could have been used to such good effect in building up and revolutionizing the old unions.

UTOPIAN DUAL UNIONISM

Many similar utopian experiments have been made to cast aside the whole labor movement and to start entirely with a new organization. These have had a very serious effect upon the organization of Labor as a whole, an effect approaching disaster. They have drawn away the revolutionists and progressives from the old trade unions where they were most sorely needed to offset the capitalistic teachings

of the reactionary leadership and to give impetus to the awakening radical sentiment among the rank and file. It was like taking the ignition system out of a motor car, to withdraw these militants from the unions. The unions became dead to every urge of progress, and where they did not retrogress, they stood still. The conservative leaders rejoiced at the radical exodus. They were happy to be rid of those who watched them and questioned their policies; they would now have things their own way. And with what result we see today, a labor movement utterly demoralized and incapable of taking even a defensive stand against the attacks of industrial capitalism.

Our present labor leadership is hide-bound and capitalistic. Naturally it cannot go very far in fighting capitalism. It will not take a determined stand against capitalism, for that would be socialistic. It will dicker with capitalism where capitalism is willing to dicker with it. When capitalism gets big and strong it turns the labor leaders away. Turned down by the big capitalists they go back to Washington and dicker with the capitalist Congress. They won't tolerate a labor party, as that would be anti-capitalist. They won't favor a change in the form of the unions to meet the demands of industry, for that would be radicalism. They lean back in their swivel chairs and reflect: "The big fellows have turned us down but there are still a number of small concerns willing to dicker with us. While those remain the unions will be safe for our salaries. We stand pat."

THE FAILURE OF CRAFT UNIONISM

Now let us see if this is not literally true. Apart from the railroads there is not a large corporation in the country that has a union agreement, and not so many of the small ones for that matter. All the big corporations have turned the unions down cold, and the unions have never been able to work enough men in under cover to make even a dent in the operation of the plants by a walkout. It has been impossible to get unity of action among all the different unions that cover a big plant, either to colonize it or to make a drive for membership in the open amongst the employees. There are too many unions and not enough unionism.

Here is a case in point to prove my assertion: The General Electric was a union plant. The molders had a grievance and walked out. The company sent their patterns to a scab foundry. Scab castings came in. Union machinists finished them up. Union metal polishers,

union electricians and all the other different unions worked on them and not a thing happened. Some of the men didn't even know that the molders were out. That happened two years ago. The strike was lost. It was lost at its inception. How could it be won under the circumstances? That is the sort of unionism we have in America and the reactionary leadership is opposed to a change.

Strikes are being lost every day for want of allied union support. Single unions strike. The other unions stay on the job and the end is disaster for the strikers. Indeed, so few are the strikes that are won nowadays that one is inclined to think that if the general run of unionists knew the figures they would decide to stay on the job and lose rather than suffer the loss of a strike and bear the humiliation of being licked. But they should know the weakness of their craft unions, that they may be stirred to take measures looking to their improvement. The leaders don't suffer by lost strikes. Their pay goes on just the same, win or lose. They take no chances.

The winning of individual strikes is a thing of the past. Even where a number of unions band together and strike they fail unless the entire corporation is closed up. The recent railroad shopmen's strike has proven this. Seven crafts were involved in this strike including the entire mechanical departments of the roads. The mechanical department of every railroad in the country was tied up tight. The walkout was complete. But the trains kept on running as usual until the equipment began to break down from lack of repair. The train crews and trackmen, clerks, telegraphers, etc., stayed at work. The companies built bunk houses and gathered scabs. Some companies made settlements with the strikers but in no case did the men get the wages they struck to maintain. The other companies refused to deal with the strikers at all. The strike has been a sad failure, and that failure is not due to the lack of solidarity on the part of the men involved. They stood loyally together, and shoulder to shoulder they faced the gaint railroad corporations and the U. S. Government that attempted to break the strike by its drastic injunction.

The shopmen's strike failed for want of union support. The nine unions that stood by the companies killed it. Had these unions possessed the real, the true spirit of unionism—one for all and all for one—they would have walked out with their brothers and the greatest strike in history would have been won, hands down, in twenty-four hours. Be it said for the men, however, that the sentiment was strong for a walkout. They were in full sympathy with their brothers on

strike. They knew that the shopmen were fighting the fight of all railroad men, that the loss of the strike meant defeat for the men who stayed at work as well as those who struck, that if the companies can lick the shopmen today, tomorrow they will tackle the trainmen. But the men could not get action. They belonged to nine different unions with nine sets of reactionary, capitalistic leaders who don't believe in sympathetic strikes. The sympathetic strike sentiment was stifled and the men were forced to stay on their jobs and knowingly helped to defeat their fellow unionists by cooperating with scabs, virtually becoming scabs themselves. Another case of too many unions and not enough unionism, augmented by too many leaders and no leadership.

This history of the shopmen's strike tells the whole story of our antiquated craft union movement and illustrates in the clearest possible way its inherent weakness. The railroad workers are organized in every department from the section men to the engineers and office men; thus there was no obstacle to a general walkout in support of the shopmen that could not have been easily overcome had there not been so many unions, each master of its specific job and owing allegiance to no other. Sixteen different kinds of jobs and 16 separate unions to take care of them. Why 16? A railroad is not organized that way. A railroad has one organization, with one center, one head, and all departments are mere extensions, arms reaching out from that center and always responsive to its commands. That is real organization and by having it a railroad can function properly and concentrate its force at any one point at will. Now suppose a railroad had an organization on every division, each independent of all the others. It doesn't take much thought to see how soon the system would be balled up. Yet that would be only a fraction of the number of organizations the workers have on every railroad. The logic of the situation is clear—fewer and stronger unions are the prime necessity of the hour.

Our unions have practically the same form and use about the same tactics that they started out with at the dawn of industry. It has never occurred to the leaders of Labor that when the foundry, machine and blacksmith shops were combined under one management that these mechanics should also be united in one union. The concentration of the shops made for economy in production and efficiency in management. It reduced competition amongst the bosses; it increased their control over the market; it magnified their power over the workers

many fold. All of which does not seem to have had the least effect upon the leaders of Labor who have kept on fiddling upon their one-string unions, blind as bats in daytime to the tremendous changes going on all around them. The criminal inefficiency of the leadership is costing the workers millions of dollars and millions of hours of labor yearly; not to speak of the loss of highly important educational opportunities that every progressive labor movement provides for its membership. The incapacity of craft unionism has been proven a thousand times over in recent years.

CHAPTER III.

AMALGAMATION THE WAY TO PROGRESS

AT this stage in the evolution of industry the strike of a single union has no more chance of success than did the strike of a single workman twenty-five years ago. Organization is subject to the same evolutionary process as all other social institutions, and organizations of labor are no exception to the general rule, although there is a philosophy to the effect that it is. Capitalism, as we have seen, has evolved from its primitive stage of craftism into gigantic industrial combinations. Labor unionism must follow or it will be wiped out. It must consolidate its ranks ever more firmly through a steady process of amalgamation.

THE WAY THAT FAILED

For many years it was the fate of the American labor movement not to recognize this fact. The militants held almost universally that the old unions were static and incapable of evolution. They believed that they had to set up new unions to replace the old ones. The new ones were, of course, modeled on the most advanced industrial lines. Everything was provided for that would be necessary in the march of Labor to the goal of its ultimate destiny. The best economic thought was consulted in the drafting of charts for such organizations; every detail was worked out on scientific lines. Nothing was lacking on paper to make them complete in every respect. But the program failed nevertheless.

The Socialist Trades and Labor Alliance was the first union of this character ever set up. It struggled along for ten years, never having more than a handful of members, and it was absorbed into the amalgamation that composed the I. W. W. in 1905. The Alliance attacked the old unions viciously. It had an able leader who possessed a vitriolic tongue that he did not spare, but to no effect. The scientific industrial union was let severely alone by the workers. In spite of this failure another attempt on a larger scale was made in Chicago in 1905. By that time the "new union" idea had gained intense popularity amongst revolutionists, who had come to look upon the old unions as only fit food for the fishes. They regarded these bodies as hopelessly lost, so deeply were the antiquated craft unions immersed

in conservatism. They declared that the reactionary craft leaders were so firmly entrenched that it would be utterly impossible to dislodge them if that were tried. But the I. W. W., despite the great start that it got, has likewise proved incapable of replacing the old craft union movement with a new organization. Today it has far fewer members than when it was formed 18 years ago. Many other dual unions, most of them operating in single industries, have had the same fate. With but a couple of notable exceptions, they have never succeeded in getting a real grip in the industries.

The reason for this is that the dual union method is wrong. In the fight of the progressive elements against the reactionaries in the unions splits and secession movements are sometimes inevitable. The thing that is wrong is to advocate them as a settled policy, instead of doing all possible to avoid them. Splits are injurious because they set worker against worker and bring confusion and weakness into the movement. In this country they have resulted in pulling the great number of militants out of the mass unions and leaving these organizations in the unrestricted possession of the reactionaries. This is why our movement is so far behind in development.

ABANDONING PAST MISTAKES

The method proposed by the Trade Union Educational League, an educational body composed of militant workers inside of the trade and industrial unions, is the exact opposite of the dual union program. Instead of pulling the active workers out of the mass organizations, be these A. F. of L. or independent, its plan is to keep the militants in these unions where, by organization and activity, they can put new life and vim into them. This is in harmony with the best policies of revolutionaries as practised all over the world.

The League maintains that it is not necessary to go off and start a new union just because one gets a new idea or has a tough struggle with the reactionaries. Experience proves that it is far easier to remodel the existing old organizations. It repudiates the spurious science which alleges that labor unions are not subject to the influence of a changed environment; that they are crystallized institutions incapable of modification. This charge, baseless and unscientific, was made originally under mistaken apprehension. That the unions have not kept pace in development with the capitalist institutions is largely the fault of the very rebels who condemn them. These militants deserted the old unions and left them to their fate in the hands of the

reactionary leaders who have run them into the ground. But now, seeing the error of their old tactics, the militants are organizing themselves inside the mass unions and are working vigorously for the plan of amalgamation.

During the years that the radicals have been endeavoring to build up utopian dual unions, the old unions have been approaching amalgamation by very slow and careful steps and without being aware of what they were doing. Reacting to the pressure of the capitalists the unions have been closing in toward each other. In the various federations we have the expression of this abandonment by the unions of their former isolation.

It is a remarkable fact in the history of the labor movement that all forward movements had their beginning at the bottom, down amongst the rank and file. There is no record where the leaders have taken the initiative in any progressive move. But there are cases in plenty where the leaders have barricaded the path of progress and held back the regular forward movement of union affairs for a time. All blocking of progress is only for a time, and often a short time. The reactionaries are soon swept aside by the rising tide of progress. The federation movement first made its appearance amongst the building trades at a time when the International unions were too weak to block it. It went on for a time and the leaders saw it wasn't going to disturb things as they were, so they approved. It spread to other industries and finally became universal.

It is every evident, however, that the leaders were determined that the process of getting together would not proceed any further, not if in their power to prevent it, for they have fought bitterly every suggestion that the idea be carried to its logical conclusion. They saw that any further advance along that line would involve fundamental basic changes in the unions, including the possible abolition of some of the salaried offices; and no well-paid officer, regarding his personal welfare as paramount, would consider practical and good union policy any change that might involve a reduction of his salary. But alas for the stability of officialdom, change is the order of evolution!

CRAFT AUTONOMY A FETISH

Federation appeals to the craft unions because it insures their craft autonomy. The unions are all strong on "craft autonomy," which means to them the mastery over their own craft and the right to do

as they please, irrespective of the rights of other trades that work beside them and whose liberties are tied up absolutely with theirs. Craft autonomy is a holdover idea from the craft stage of industry and it stands today in the same category as that other ancient slogan, "individual freedom." Today the individual cannot have any freedom that is not bound up with the freedom of the group of which he is a part. Within the group or union he has a freedom compatible with the freedom of all the other members of the union, but he cannot be permitted any freedom that will involve the liberty of the other members of the union. For instance; the individual is not permitted to make his own terms with the boss. Why? Because the union can make better terms for the individual than he can make for himself. Were he so permitted the whole theory of unionism would be undermined and the union might as well dissolve.

In the industries the craft occupies a place parallel to that of an individual in the craft union. It knows that the union of unions, the union of all the crafts in the industry, can make better terms for the several crafts than can any one of them individually. This discovery has been the basis of federation, and now of amalgamation. When the individual joins the union he trades his individual liberty to make his own terms with the boss, a very shallow privilege at best, for the more substantial returns in higher wages and shorter hours that the union procures for him. In like manner the craft union trades its "autonomy" for the better conditions the industrial union secures for its members. In both cases, the individual and the craft union alike get the best of the bargain. The "liberty" they give up is no liberty at all. It is pure-and-simple illusion. When an individual joins a union, or a union the industrial union, what takes place is simply this: They both get somebody else to perform a disagreeable duty for them, and do it a lot better than they could do it themselves.

WHY FEDERATION FALLS DOWN

The words "Freedom" and "Autonomy" sound well to the ear, but they don't get us anywhere when we go up against a big capitalist combination. Craft autonomy has been the bane of the Labor movement for many years. Fearing the loss of their mythical autonomy, the unions have not tied up together as tightly as they should have done. The consequences have been disastrous in many instances. The federation idea insures craft autonomy, because the unions would not join otherwise. In the federation each union is still master of its

own destiny; it recognizes no power greater than its own; it controls its own particular kind of work and makes its own conditions most of the time. At such times as it "kicks-in" with the federation it still refuses to confer any of its power upon the federation, thus leaving the latter helpless. At such times unions through their numerous officials, get to wrangling and there is often a split in the midst of a strike. Time after time crafts have deserted the federations and made separate terms with the bosses. The latter know only too well the weakness of federation and have not been slow to play union against union over and over again. And the narrow selfishness of craft union leadership has made such union non-unionism possible.

Each craft union is a little republic and has its narrow craft selfishness highly developed through the years of individual craft union struggle. It cannot be relied upon to stand the strain of long drawn out federated fights; and the federations being powerless to control their craft units often go to pieces in the midst of a strike. So long as these little craft republics exist there can be no real unity and solidarity in the Labor movement. Each craft will continue to fight for its own particular place in the Sun, itself deciding just where that particular place shall be. In the scramble for craft placement the broad and all-important issue of industrial unity and solidarity is lost sight of and chaos reigns supreme.

When the unions amalgamate, as they must, the question of autonomy will be settled once for all. Then all power will be passed on to the industrial center and the crafts will be directed by it, as the individual member is now directed by his local. The industrial union will be the unit of authority. We cannot have industrial unity until we have *one* union with *one* treasury and *one* directing center. Federation cannot supply these essentials of unity and therefore has proven a failure, and must make way for the superior form of organization.

THE NECESSARY NEXT STEP

Amalgamation is inescapably the next step in the evolution of the labor movement. It is the most practical and the easiest way to bring about the desired result, industrial unionism. It is the evolutionary process, the way mankind in the mass moves. Sometimes the mass may be driven out of its workaday channel, as in times of war; but left to itself it will mosey along in its natural way, adjusting itself to new conditions with the least possible disturbance of old customs and ways of life. It is not surprising then that the workers have not

jumped into the new forms created for them right out of the intellect. The new "scientific" unions covering all industries were doomed to failure from the start. Amalgamation appeals to the worker because it is something close by. He doesn't have to give up his union that has become part of his life through years of association. He can understand the program of amalgamation, which is simply to fuse together the existing mass organizations in his industry. Instinctively he realizes that this is a step in harmony with normal labor union development.

If we look over into Europe we will see that our brother unionists have got quite a start on us in the matter of industrial unions, and in every case their method has been that of Amalgamation. The old craft unions are being lashed together, yea, riveted, never to be torn asunder. Over there industrialism is more clear to them than it is to us. And there is a reason. Over there they haven't had any "intellectuals" charting fancy scientific universal industrial unions with which to lure the militants away from the unions; and as a consequence real industrial unionism is well on its way. Amalgamation is the only method they think about over there; and Amalgamation is doing the work, as it will here just as soon as we get down to business. There is no excuse for us now not to go right along and put this big job over. What others can do we surely can, and now that the militants are coming back to the ranks there is no doubt that the big Amalgamation drive will sweep the country clean of craft unions and bring our labor movement up to the intellectual level of other countries. Industrial unionism, through amalgamation, will soon be a reality in America.

CHAPTER IV.

THE AMALGAMATION MOVEMENT

BY the time a movement gets to be a movement and has people boosting for it, it has traveled a long time unseen. For many years the workers have been clearing the ground for amalgamation, actually doing the preparatory work, by trying out another and less radical form of union affiliation, namely, federation. Seeing that conditions were ripe and over ripe for the inauguration of amalgamation, the Trade Union Educational League came along and made amalgamation the object of its first big drive. These League militants, who honeycomb the entire labor movement, report that the workers are ready for Amalgamation right now, if they could only get action on their International officials, who stand in the way of every new idea for fear it might explode under their seats and throw them back into the ranks of the working class.

Of course, it must not be understood by this that the officials are going permanently to block the way to Amalgamation. The movement is now being organized in every industry in the country including Canada; for, so far as the labor movement is concerned there is no boundary line between us and our brothers to the north. As unionists we are one nation, with one flag, one goal and one common enemy to conquer. The enemy has tried to separate us, but we still hold to our one union idea and Canada holds her place as one division of the proletarian army of North America.

The great stimulus to the movement is the breakdown and failure of the craft unions and the federations of craft unions. The federations have at times done good service by holding the unions together when making the demands upon the bosses. But on the whole they have failed in their mission to unite the craft unions, and now the demand for a better tie has been raised and the Trade Union Educational League answers with "Amalgamation."

THE RAILROAD INDUSTRY

The movement for amalgamation is being given special attention by the railroad men whose recent sad experience in the shopmen's strike has been an eye opener to them and has quickened their minds to the crying need of the transportation industry. These railroad men

have been swept away at one fell swoop all that had taken them a quarter of a century to secure. The Railroad Labor Board, a body created by the Government to do the dirty work of the railroad companies, issued an order breaking down the conditions of toil on the roads and cutting the wages of the men; and the "Peoples" government issued an injunction to help put the dastardly ukase into effect. The Government came out boldly on the side of the railroads and said it would use all the power at its command to break down union conditions on the railroads and establish the "open shop."

The seven shopmen's unions struck against the order of the Board cutting their wages, increasing their hours at the will of the roads, making Sunday work single time, abolishing overtime and establishing piecework. The railroads fully expected the men to strike, but they had no fear that the strike would become general. They had not so far attacked the conditions of the train and engine men, and they knew the latter would not strike to aid the shopmen. Craft union experience told the companies that it was perfectly safe for them to let the shopmen strike if they wished, that the other unions would stand at their posts, and they did. Nine union stayed on their jobs and helped the companies lick the other seven. That's the sort of unionism we have on the railroads; it's the sort we have all along the line throughout all the industries, and it is the sort we will continue to have till we put over the amalgamation project.

All the trainmen knew the ugly position they were in. These men who took extra chances with their lives by operating defective rolling stock, knew that if they stepped down from their cabs and cabooses and folded their arms the shopmen would win mighty quick; and they knew further that the defeat of the shopmen would reflect upon their own conditions. They knew that they would be the next to be put to the sword. All this was perfectly plain to them but they couldn't do anything about it. They were not prepared for such an emergency. They belonged to nine different craft unions with nine reactionary sets of leaders. Under the conditions it was impossible to act.

Although organized 100 per cent the railroad unions were still powerless to defend the workers. They stand condemned as antiquated implements of war, absolutely powerless in the face of the centralized railroad dictatorship. The 16 railroad unions must be amalgamated into one powerful fighting machine in the near future, or the "open shop" will be established in every department of the service; and

these disunited unions will be used as the principle means of bringing it about. The shrewd and brainy railroad masters will continue to play these 16 unions against each other like so many pawns on a chess board.

Amalgamation of the old unions is the only thing that is talked about as a remedy for the present deplorable railroad situation. The dual union idea is dead among railroad men. Nobody is thinking about organizing new unions. "I should be the first one to oppose any such program. The lessons of past experience warn against any such further attempt. The rank and file must insist upon getting together and must furnish the impetus for such concentration and combination as are necessary to unite all the workers of a given industry within one compact and militant body," wrote Eugene V. Debs in a recent issue of *THE LABOR HERALD*. As a leader of the defunct American Railway Union Brother Debs learned the futility of dualism. He is now a staunch supporter of the Trade Union Educational League and its program of Amalgamation.

To organize the movement for Amalgamation a conference was held in Chicago at which were present militants of all 16 unions. This conference issued a plan of Amalgamation and elected a committee to carry on the propoganda. The *Railroad Amalgamation Advocate* was established as the official organ of the Committee. The work of this Committee is being financed by voluntary subscriptions. Already the idea and plan has been endorsed by thousands of the local unions. Many local and system federations and two big International railway unions have adopted the plan. The idea is steadily gaining adherents and it is confidently expected that the railroad workers will be one of the first industrial groups of unions to close up their ranks and present a solid front to the enemy.

THE METAL TRADES

No industry in America is weaker from an organization standpoint than the metal trades. In this tremendous industrial division there are, according to the U. S. 1920 census, 4,476,137 workers employed. Of these not more than 200,000 are organized. But they are divided up into 30 or more unions. Thus a united front amongst the workers is totally impossible. The bosses have gone ahead for years building trusts and super-trusts through a process of amalgamating their companies. But the unions have stood still, adhering to their antiquated

policy of craft organization. Consequently the workers are demoralized and helpless in front of their ruthless exploiters.

Amalgamation sentiment, propagated by the International Committee for Amalgamation in the Metal Industry, is rapidly spreading in these basic trades. A definite plan of consolidation has been put out by the Committee, scientifically providing for the merging of all the existing organizations into one body. A number of years ago the International Association of Machinists, by referendum vote, went on record to bring about amalgamation. But inasmuch as the whole matter was left in the hands of the officials nothing further was done about it. The new moment is strictly a rank and file proposition. Its aim is to educate the great masses to its concrete goal of amalgamation and to fight the thing through at all the conventions of the metal trades organizations. Amalgamation is now a burning issue in this industry.

THE NEEDLE TRADES

In the clothing industry there are seven International Unions, totaling about 300,000 members of the 520,777 employed in the entire industry. There is a strong movement on foot, led by the International Committee of the Needle Trades Section, T. U. E. L., to combine all these into one powerful industrial organization. To this end a concrete plan of amalgamation has been worked out and printed, and is being popularized widespread amongst the broad masses of clothing workers. On May 5-6, 1923, the Needle Trades Section held its first national conference in New York, with all important clothing centers in the country represented. Chief among its acts was the working out of plans to push-through amalgamation in the near future.

One great union in the industry, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, stands committed to the calling of a general convention to amalgamate all the unions. The other organizations quite generally endorse the principle of a needle trades alliance, or federation. Since the amalgamation movement has grown so strong in the industry the advocates of alliance have the more vigorously put forth their proposition as a substitute. But the great rank and file will have none of it. The needle trades workers will probably be the first in this country to actually combine their several unions into one industrial organization.

THE BUILDING TRADES

The amalgamation movement is growing steadily among the building trades workers, due largely to the work of the International Committee for Amalgamation of the Building Trades. For many years these skilled workers, strategically situated, went along upon an individualistic basis with each craft fighting its own battle regardless of the interests of the others. In 1908, they formed themselves into the loosely-constructed Building Trades Department of the A. F. of L., to which 16 of the 17 important national craft unions are now affiliated. This federal form of organization has failed completely to bring about solidarity of the building trades workers. Time after time the employers have smashed the organizations by playing off one set against the other. The present situation in Chicago offers a typical example of this division inherent in craft unionism. Judge Landis, foisted upon the unions as an arbitrator, handed down a decision which half the organizations accepted and half rejected. Result, the movement is split in the middle. Trades which prided themselves a few years ago upon their sterling unionism are now openly working with Landis-award strike-breakers under police protection. The lessons from this and hundreds of similar incidents in the history of the building trades workers are beginning to be understood, and throughout the industry the movement is rapidly growing to supercede the present loose and ineffective federative system by the amalgamation of all the unions into one solid organization.

THE PRINTING TRADES

Like the workers in all other industries, those in the printing trades are suffering from craft division. Split into six organizations, comprising only 145,000 out of the 291,000 who are employed in the industry, the printing trades workers are increasingly helpless before the "open-shop" drive of the employers. The loose federations amongst them are powerless to bring about real solidarity, even as this is the case in other industries. Most of the large printing plants of the country are non-union, including Rand-McNally & Co., Curtis Publishing Co., Doubleday, Page & Co., etc.

The national 44-hour fight, begun on May 1st, 1921, and still going on, has emphasized the weakness of craft unionism in the printing trades. Only two of the organizations, the International Typographical Union and the Photo-Engravers, have been able to make anything

like a real showing in this bitter struggle. But even they have suffered heavily, the I. T. U. losing a considerable percentage of its membership and spending \$15,000,000 in strike benefits. As for the Pressmen and Bookbinders, they have been dealt severe blows, in many cases losing heavily of their membership and failing to gain the goal sought. Even the Stereotypers and Electrotypers have not escaped unscathed. The fight was marked throughout by all the evils of craft division, and it points out clearer than ever the lesson that if printers are to progress they must unite their forces.

Two International Unions, the I. T. U. and Bookbinders, have endorsed the principle of amalgamation. But their officials are doing little or nothing about it. The rest of the unions in the industry endorse the usual "closer affiliation" substitute. The real work for amalgamation is being carried on by the International Committee for Amalgamation in the Printing Trades, which is campaigning in all printing trades organizations for a general merger of all the existing unions into one body.

THE FOOD INDUSTRY

In the manufacture and distribution of food products the same division and weakness exists as in other industries. There are nine of the most important unions, one of which, the Amalgamated Food Workers, an industrial union with its stronghold in New York, is an independent organization. Of the at least 1,500,000 workers in the various branches of this great industry, not more than 100,000 are organized. From the point of realizing their common interests the workers in the food industry are very backward. Even the principle of federation has not come to be practiced amongst them. Each union goes its own way regardless of the rest.

But if the workers are sluggish in improving their organization, the capitalists are not. Every branch of the food industry is being rapidly trustified. The great packing interests are steadily combining their forces and extending their control. Likewise the combinations making up the sugar and flour trusts. The baking interests and the hotel companies are merging into larger and larger units. And in the retail section of the industry chain restaurants, grocery stores, etc., multiply apace.

At last the workers are beginning to awaken somewhat to the necessities of the situation. Two of the International Unions have

declared for a general consolidation, the Amalgamated Food Workers and the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen. The instrument of the militants for carrying on the educational work among the rank and file of all the organizations is the General Committee for Amalgamation of All Unions in the Food Industry.

SHOE AND LEATHER INDUSTRY

The shoe and leather industry is a classic field of dual unionism. There are at least a dozen organizations, all independent of each other and all antagonistic towards one another. Consequently not more than 30% of the industry is organized. In this industry the need for amalgamation is a crying one. Recently the many independent unions tried to amalgamate, but the movement only partially succeeded. The officials of several of the organizations, seeing that there was no chance for them to be elected to official positions in the new amalgamated body, got out injunctions against the latter organization and did everything possible to prevent a general consolidation.

With this example in mind, the militants in the industry are now proceeding upon a more fundamental plan. They have organized the International Committee of the Shoe and Leather Industry. Its policy differs from the old amalgamation program in the important respects that it is based upon winning over the rank and file, not simply the officialdom, to the necessity for amalgamation, and that it includes the A. F. of L. unions as well as the independents. The International Committee held its first national conference in Boston May 13th, where definite plans were laid out to intensify the campaign for amalgamation in every leather union and industrial center of the United States. In its attitude towards the many unions in the shoe and leather industry, the International Committee undertakes to put into effect the general principles outlined by the T. U. E. L. for such complicated situations where many unions exist in opposition to each other. The League's statement follows:

Relations Between Rival Unions: Where, because of voluntary withdrawals, mass expulsions, splits and secessions, or independent organization, certain unions exist separated from the main mass unions in their respective crafts or industries, the policy of the Trade Union Educational League is as follows:

(a) Where the independent unions are weak in numbers and influence, consisting chiefly of militants, they shall work for re-affilia-

tion with the stronger organizations in their industries, either as groups or as individual members, and thus bring the militants into their proper position among the organized masses.

(b) Where the independent unions are strong numerically and actually function as mass organizations the League shall do its utmost to upbuild and maintain them. But such unions shall not war against the old organizations nor pull individual or local unions away from them. In cases where two or more mass unions exist in an industry in rivalry with each other, the League militants will remain in their respective organizations and work to put into effect the following general policies: (1) to bring about temporary adjustments of the jurisdictional disputes between the affected organizations and to turn their attention away from fighting each other and towards the organization of the unorganized; (2) to carry on an energetic and persistent campaign for amalgamation of all the rival unions, A. F. of L. and Independents, into one industrial body.

THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY

The textile industry is one of the oldest in America. For 133 years it has been ruthlessly exploiting men, women, and children. A low degree of organization prevails. Of the 1,000,000 workers in the industry, not over 100,000 are organized. These are split up into fully a score of unions, squabbling amongst themselves, and constructed according to every known type. The employers, on the other hand, are well organized and trustified. In no industry in America are the trade unions so variegated and the workers so helpless and underpaid as in the textile industry.

There is no outlook for the textile workers better than that of slavery unless their great number of unions are brought together and united. Long ago the employers quit the foolish policy of competition. Under the leadership of the General Amalgamation Committee of the Textile Industry, which like the other similar bodies is a rank and file proposition, the workers now are also carrying on an agitation for one union of all textile workers. This Committee held its first national conference in New York on May 5, 1923. In this industry the workers are so demoralized and helpless that amalgamation will be difficult to bring about. But the militants are going at the task

with vigor and intelligence, and will soon bring order and solidarity out of the present chaotic conditions.

THE MARINE INDUSTRY

A few years ago the marine transport industry was one of the best organized in America. As a result of the war situation the International Longshoremen's Association and the Seamen's International Union built themselves into powerful organizations controlling most of the workers in their respective branches. But incompetent leadership, coupled with the inescapable weakness of craft unionism, has wrecked these organizations. Since the war they have lost strike after strike. Thousands and thousands of their members quit in disgust and gave up unionism altogether. Other thousands joined in secession movements of various kinds. The general result is that the industry is now split up into at least 30 organizations, all in rivalry with each other. With such a demoralized front the marine workers are practically helpless, the employers having virtually a free hand in establishing wages, hours, and working conditions.

In May, 1923, rank and file elements in these various organizations of the marine industry have formed a *Committee to propagate the amalgamation of all the unions into one body*. This is known as the International Marine Workers' Amalgamation Committee. It is carrying on an agitation in all the ports of the United States and Canada.

THE TOBACCO INDUSTRY

The same as in all other spheres, the amalgamation movement has spread to the tobacco industry. For many years the cigarmakers were labor aristocrats, being highly skilled mechanics. But industrial evolution has shaken them from their strategic position. The introduction of the mold, the endless rubber belt, and machinery of various sorts, which has enabled the employers to use unskilled and semi-skilled labor, broke down the old craft monopoly. A further factor in weakening the workers was the trustification of the industry and the building up of tremendous reserve funds by the tobacco kings.

While this evolution of the industry was going on, the union failed to keep pace. It clung tenaciously to the old outworn policies, with the result that it has been practically shoved aside by the onward march of industrial development. Only a small fraction of the in-

dustry is organized, and the trade union officialdom is helpless to do anything about it. In this crisis the rank and file are stirring. They have organized the Amalgamation Committee for the Tobacco Industry, and are advancing the program of consolidating the several unions in the industry into one. They propose to renovate and revivify the movement from top to bottom. Their program of reorganization is thorough-going and complete.

THE COAL MINING INDUSTRY

Although the coal miners have an industrial union which takes in all classes of workers employed in and around the mines, their experience of the past few years shows that they must seek to develop still greater combinations. They have organized a rank and file committee known as the Progressive International Committee of the United Mine Workers of America. In its general program occur the following statements regarding amalgamation:

The Progressive Miners heartily endorse the movement to amalgamate all the craft unions of the country into a series of industrial unions. In its early days the coal mining industry was afflicted with craft unionism, but the miners saw fit to combine all their unions into one organization to cover the whole industry. In the great fights that have since occurred the industrial form of our union has stood us in good stead. Had we been so organized that one part of the working force remained at work while the rest were striking, we would have been defeated and our organization broken up long ago. Speaking from experience, we heartily recommend industrial unionism to the labor movement as a whole, and we pledge ourselves to do whatever we can to bring it about.

There must be created a real fighting alliance between the men who dig the coal and those who haul it. This must not be a weak affiliation such as exists at present, which produces merely an exchange of friendly telegrams of sympathy when either group is on strike. The miners and railroad workers must actually join forces for united action and fight side by side in times of strikes.

The sentiment for amalgamation is rising rapidly in all the industries. As a result of the great "open shop" drive of the last few years the workers are coming to understand more and more that the old craft unions are helpless in the face of modern, highly-organized

capitalism. The Trade Union Educational League, through its systematized work of education, is organizing and directing this sentiment along practical lines. It has made amalgamation one of the burning issues now before Organized Labor. As a result of its efforts several International Unions, 14 State Federations, and countless city central bodies and local unions have declared for amalgamation. The American labor movement is about to advance from its primitive condition of craft unionism to a modern and effective state of industrial unionism. Only in this manner can it withstand the "open shop" and forge ahead on its way to ultimate freedom. The list of amalgamation committees follows:

- International Committee for Amalgamation in the Railroad Industry,
Otto H. Wangerin, Secretary-Treasurer,
411 Dakota Bldg., St. Paul, Minn.
- International Committee for Amalgamation in the Metal Industry,
John Werlik, Secretary-Treasurer,
1432 So. Keeler Ave., Chicago, Ill.
- International Committee of the Needle Trades Section, T. U. E. L.,
Joseph Zack, Secretary,
208 East 12th St., New York City.
- International Committee for Amalgamation of the Building Trades,
Ed. Johnson, Secretary,
106 No. La Salle St., Room 41, Chicago, Ill.
- International Committee for Amalgamation of the Printing Trades
Unions,
E. L. Lee, Secretary,
520 West 163rd St., New York City.
- General Committee for the Amalgamation of All Unions in the Food
Industry,
V. H. Sundell, Secretary,
1114 Wellington Ave., Chicago, Ill.
- International Amalgamation Committee of the Shoe and Leather Industry,
J. Kassner, Secretary,
60 Pemberton Square, Room 310, Boston, Mass.

General Amalgamation Committee of the Textile Industry,
Albert Fleischer, Secretary,
208 East 12th St., New York City.

International Marine Workers' Amalgamation Committee,
Joseph Stone, Secretary,
208 East 12th St., New York City.

Amalgamation Committee for the Tobacco Industry,
C. J. Blockland, Secretary,
200 I St., South Boston, Mass.

Progressive International Committee of the United Mine Workers of
America,
Thos. Myerscough, Secretary,
35 Miller St., Pittsburgh, Pa.

All militants should get in touch with the Committees in their
respective industries.

CHAPTER V.

DEPARTMENTALIZED INDUSTRIAL UNIONISM

A COMMON objection to amalgamation is the argument that the industrial union will throw all the workers together in a general mass, eliminating craft identity and thus creating a confusion and general indifference among the rank and file that will weaken rather than strengthen the organization. This would, indeed, be a vital objection were it true. But all over the world where such industrial unions exist they are formed on the basis of departments, each of which contains several closely-allied crafts. The League is urging this same form here. In each industry there will be one organization covering the whole body of workers, but this will be sub-divided into sections or departments for the principal branches of the industry. This will enable the respective trades to handle their particular problems efficiently and at the same time benefit from the strength of the whole mass.

Thus, far from being a confused mixture, the departmentalized industrial union will be a system of perfect order. Each department will handle its own line of work efficiently, and all departments will be blended together in the general organization through their representatives on the national executive board. Compared with this modern system of organization the present craft unions, each going its separate way and duplicating the union work of the industries as many as thirty times, is confusion worse confounded. The departmentalized union will be like an army, with its separate branches of artillery, cavalry, infantry, etc., but all welded together into one powerful machine.

Under the industrial system of unionism the workers will obtain tremendous power compared with the craft or federated form. Unity of action will at all times be obtainable. There will be no craft or departmental strikes without the absolute assurance that the whole industrial union stands solidly behind them with the combined strength of all. The painful spectacle of unions going down to defeat before the onslaughts of combined capital, while allied unions stand by with seeming indifference and give their fallen brothers no helping hand, will be a thing of the past. Such preposterous unionism will be buried so deep it will never be revived except in scornful memory. It will then be difficult to imagine that the workers ever had such short-

visioned, narrow-minded, self-centered unionism, as our present system.

ADVANTAGES OF INDUSTRIAL UNIONISM

With the advent of departmentalized industrial unionism will come many advantages. One will be the end of the dual union scourge. Once industrial unionism is established all the workers, regardless of their other differences, will gravitate to the powerful organizations. Likewise great financial economies will be made. The amount of money and time wasted through the duplication of offices, officials, journals, conventions, etc., in our craft unions is appalling. Let us consider the metal industry as an example. In that great industrial division there are 24 International Unions, maintaining 24 expensive headquarters, with 24 high-salaried presidents, and 24 high-salaried secretaries to adorn them. They publish 24 costly journals, and have 24 international executive boards that keep the industry going 24 ways and getting nowhere. They have 24 sets of organizers and their combined work totals less than 10% of the total workers in the industry. They hold 24 separate conventions, each one of which costs the workers large sums of money. They have thousands of duplicate sets of local officers, business agents, etc., at a tremendous cost. When these 24 unions are amalgamated all this wasteful duplication will be abolished by the introduction of an efficient system of modern management. There will be but one headquarters, one set of officers, one journal, and one convention. Where chaos and wastefulness now exist, then there will be order and economy. By combining their plants the masters of industry cut out such foolish wastefulness many years ago. It is high time that Labor did the same.

But above all, departmentalized industrial unionism will give the workers the power they now so badly need. The enormous strength that the industrial unions will have is the big idea behind amalgamation. At present the 24 metal trades unions, for example, are weak and impotent through their hopeless division. But once they unite and make a general assault on the "open shop" employers, headed by the Steel Trust, they will be invincible. The same will be true of the unions in the other industries. The capitalists rule not so much because they are strong as because we are weak. When Labor learns to rise above its petty craft point of view and to draw itself into great industrial battalions, then the domination of the exploiters will be doomed.

The next great step in the workers' march to industrial freedom is the formation of great departmentalized industrial unions in every industry.

AN ORDERLY CHANGE

Amalgamation will proceed in an orderly fashion. There need be no violent disturbance of the existing organizations, with their long-established customs, dues systems, etc. The process can go ahead in a steady progress. The first step in amalgamating the unions of an industry will be to call a convention of all the unions agreeing to amalgamate. These will resolve themselves into an industrial union, and elect a general executive board to which all the unions taking part turn over their international business. For the time being all these unions will remain practically intact, each one becoming a department in the amalgamated union. When other unions decide to come in they simply elect their quotas of delegates to the general executive board and take their places as departments in the big union. The proposition is simplicity itself. There is no suggestion of throwing the crafts together in a confused mass.

This first step, by joining the unions under one head, accomplishes the main aim of amalgamation by actually uniting the workers' forces. Later on, when the workers come to thoroughly appreciate the value of industrial organization, the final stage of amalgamation can be accomplished by a gradual standardization of dues and benefits systems, and by a reduction in the number of departments. In the metal trades, for example, the 24 craft departments will eventually be reduced to five, in about the following order: Department No. 1, to include metal miners, smelters, and blast-furnace workers; No. 2, iron, steel, and tin workers; No. 3, mechanical trades; No. 4, unskilled workers; No. 5, technical and clerical workers. In the railroad industry the 16 crafts will eventually be cut to six departments, as follows: No. 1, engineers and firemen; No. 2, conductors, brakemen, and switchmen; No. 3, telegraphers, signalmen, and dispatchers; No. 4, clerks, station agents, freight handlers, express and baggagemen; No. 5, boilermakers, blacksmiths, machinists, electricians, carmen, sheet metal workers, stationary firemen; No. 6, maintenance of way workers. The same principle will apply to the other industries. With such departmentalized unions,

the organized workers will be incomparably better fitted to develop their full strength for the tasks in hand, whether these be the organ-

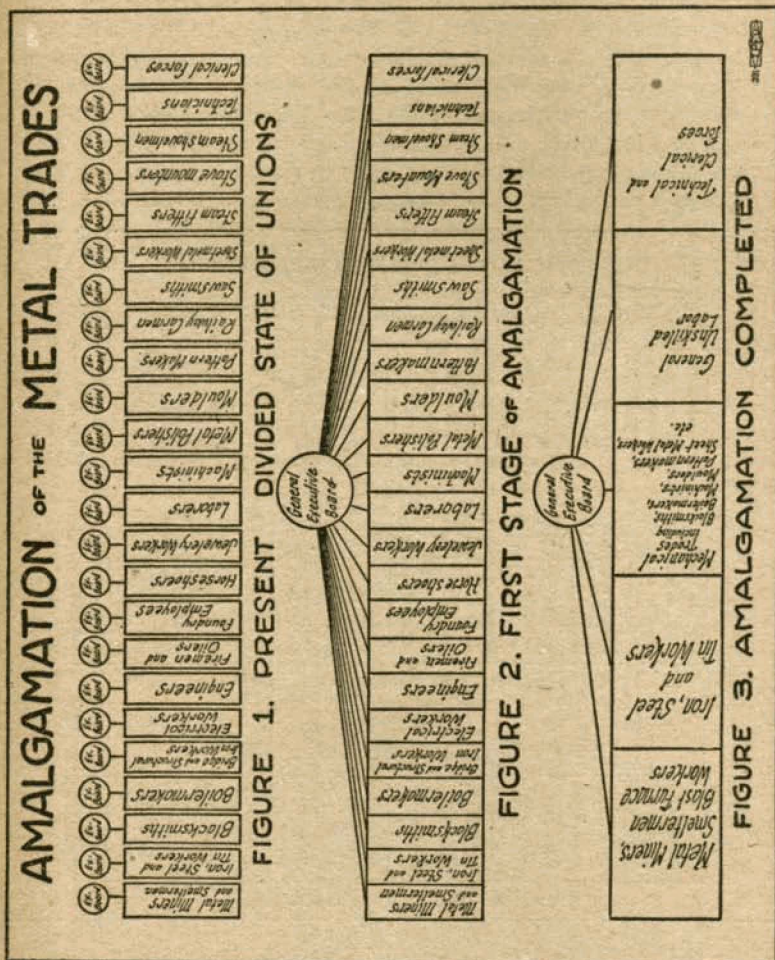


DIAGRAM SHOWING THE PROCESS OF AMALGAMATION IN THE METAL TRADES, CREATING A DEPARTMENTALIZED INDUSTRIAL UNION

izing of the great masses of workers or the putting of pressure upon the employers to secure a higher standard of life.

To the superficial observer amalgamation of the 16 standard railroad unions is the most critical of all the problems of the industrialists. Many assert it to be quite impossible, due on the one hand to the great differences in the amounts of dues paid by the members of the various unions, and on the other hand to the fact that there are six unions employed in the railroad service that are not basically railroad organizations. But both of these problems are capable of easy solution once there is a real determination to amalgamate. Industrial

PROCESS OF AMALGAMATION

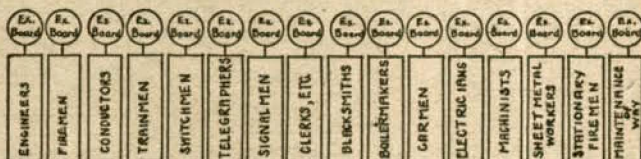


FIGURE 1—PRESENT STATUS OF UNIONS

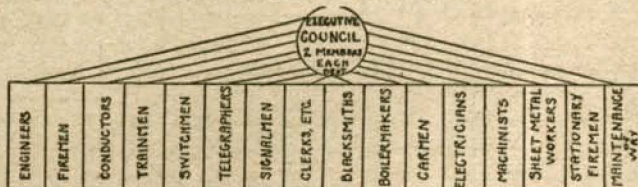


FIGURE 2—FIRST STAGE OF AMALGAMATION

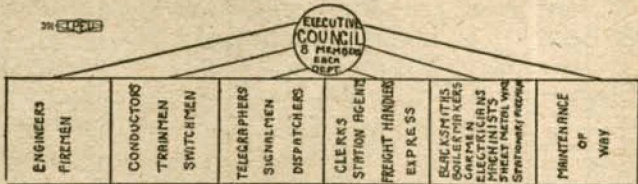


FIGURE 3—FINAL STAGE OF AMALGAMATION

DIAGRAM SHOWING THE PROCESS OF CREATING A DEPARTMENTALIZED INDUSTRIAL UNION THROUGH AMALGAMATION IN THE RAILROAD INDUSTRY

unions in other countries have mastered both of them, and the same thing can be done here.

As for the dues problem, that is readily solved through the departmental system. In each department, if necessary, different scales of dues and benefits can prevail. It is merely a technical problem such as has been worked out by every life insurance company in the country. As for the unions that are not entirely railroad organizations, the solution for them is that they will be affiliated two ways. The machinists, for example, will be affiliated to the metal trades industrial union, and also to the railroad union, paying part of their dues to each organization. The railroad union, in order to secure united action of the railroad workers, will have control of the strike activities of the railroad machinists. This system of double affiliation has been worked out by many big unions and proves thoroughly satisfactory. There is no need nor intention to split the railroad metal trades in order to bring about an industrial union of railroad workers.

The departmental plan of industrial unionism will be adopted in all the industries, because it is the only scientific method of defending the interests of the workers. It is the result of a crying need for a *system of organization that will meet the demands of modern industrial evolution*. The old clumsy method of each craft fighting its own battle is as much out of place as would be an ox-cart service in competition with modern railroads. Whether in the matter of economy and efficiency of administration, or in the defense of the workers' interests, departmentalized industrial unionism is incomparably superior to our present primitive and outworn craft organizations.

THE TEST OF EXPERIENCE

The system of departmentalized industrial unionism, as above outlined, is not a new and untried theory by any means. Our European brothers, who are far ahead of us in the matter of tactics and organization, have had such industrial unions for many years. For a long time they have been amalgamating their original craft unions into departmentalized bodies, with most satisfactory results. The English railroad workers show us a very fine example in their National Union of Railwaymen. This amalgamated union embraces all classes of railroad workers. It is divided into four departments which, giving the

various crafts ample representation, function with harmony, order, efficiency, and service as their outstanding features. Since its formation upon the departmental plan in 1913, the N. U. R. has made remarkable progress in combining the railroad workers of Great Britain. Other samples of this type of union are the Transport and General Workers' Union, the Amalgamated Engineers' Union, and the Federation of Building Trades Operatives.

In Germany, industrial unionism has reached a higher degree of development than anywhere else. The Metal Workers' Union is the largest industrial union in the world. It has a membership of 1,800,000, and it covers all branches of the metal industry. It has numerous departments through which all the different trades function and have their being as integral parts of the big whole. The entire departmental system of this giant combination of metal workers operates with smoothness and efficiency. The Metal Workers' Union was constructed by a series of amalgamations of primitive craft unions that once struggled along individually as our own are still doing. In Austria the workers have declared for the combination of their craft unions into industrial organizations, and in Australia this is now a practical fact. Twelve industrial unions contain about all the workers of Belgium. The Scandinavian workers are re-adjusting their craft unions upon an industrial basis. The work of amalgamation is going on all over the world. Only in America is it lagging.

The American capitalists lead the world for enterprise, daring, and militant progressiveness. The American labor movement leads the world in the opposite directions. It is fully 30 years behind the times in its ideas and organization structure. Its officialdom has persistently remained capitalistic and has tied the labor unions to the chariot of industrial despotism. This bond must be broken and Labor released from the thralldom of capitalist thought by the sturdy militants who are now assembling under the banner of the Trade Union Educational League. The accomplishment of departmentalized industrial unionism through amalgamation is the first and most important step in this great work of emancipation.

CHAPTER VI.

TRADE UNION EDUCATIONAL LEAGUE

THE Trade Union Educational League occupies a unique place in the labor movement. It was born out of the need of the American labor movement for a stimulant that would vitalize it into life and activity. It is the first attempt to carry education to the heart of the trade union movement in a systematic and organized manner. Deserted by the radical element for so many years, the trade unions have stagnated and stood still, while the organization of industry and the capitalist system has gone on rapidly. Especially has the leadership of labor degenerated, until today it is the laughing-stock of the unionists of the world. The American labor movement, as exemplified by its official leadership, has become a stagnant pool, conservative, capitalistic, and reactionary to the last degree. It is the function of the League, through the organization of the militants, to change all this and to put our labor movement where it rightfully belongs, in the forefront of the world labor war for the emancipation of the toilers of all lands.

Organized in Chicago in November, 1920, the League now (June, 1923) covers every industrial city and town in the United States and Canada with its groups of militants. The charge made by Mr. Gompers that the League was imported from Russia to destroy the American labor movement is definitely refuted by the fact that it already has a long history in this country. Its earliest forerunner was the Syndicalist League of North America, organized in 1912. This body, formed according to the principles of French Syndicalism, was designed to crystallize militant sentiment in the trade union movement. But the dual union idea being generally prevalent at the time, it died after two years' struggle for existence. The next effort was the International Trade Union Educational League, formed in 1916. For the same reason, the dominance of dual union tactics, this organization also died shortly. It was only with the foundation of the present League that a receptive field was at hand for the organization of the militants in the mass unions generally.

THE LEAGUE'S PROGRAM

The Trade Union Educational League is a revolutionary organization. It holds that the capitalist system, because of the contradictions in itself, not only exploits and robs the workers but must also lead to such a collapse that it will have to be replaced by a new society in which the principle of production for use, not for profit, shall prevail. The League subscribes to the formation of a Workers' Republic. It advocates the dictatorship of the proletariat, which means that none but the hand and brain workers, industrial and agricultural, should rule society. To this end one of its chief aims is to propagate revolutionary ideals amongst the masses. Upon all occasions it seeks to point out the injustices and incompetencies of the present industrial and political system, and to indicate the only remedy, the abolition of the capitalist system and the establishment of the rule of the workers. The League gives its heartiest support to Soviet Russia, the first attempt of the world's workers to put their inspiring and scientific program into effect.

In the preparation of the working class for its inevitable role of controlling production and society generally, the League does all in its power to strengthen the various types of labor activity and organization. Above all it stresses the necessity for the most compact organization possible on the industrial field. It condemns the present primitive system of craft unionism and demands a complete reorganization of the labor movement upon an industrial basis. Its campaign in this direction is meeting with wonderful success. Amalgamation has now become, because of the League's efforts, the principal issue before the labor movement. Great numbers of organizations have endorsed its program, including 14 State Federations of Labor, 7 International Unions, scores of central labor councils, and thousands of local unions. The establishment of industrial unionism in America is a project for the very near future. As a first step, the League is advocating the consolidation of the crafts in the various industries into single unions, each of which shall cover an industry. But the evolution will not stop there. The process of amalgamation must go on unceasingly until, finally, industrial unionism has become class unionism, and the whole mass of Labor has been brought into one army under one head. With one common interest and one common goal, the whole working class

must be so organized that it can move as a unit against the exploiters.

Together with an industrialized labor movement, the League strives for a strong political organization of the workers. It advocates the class struggle and condemns the principle of class collaboration, whether on the industrial or political field. The Gompers policy, which has been forced upon the labor movement as a whole, has not only reduced the workers to a political zero in the various legislative bodies, but it has also been the means of poisoning the unions with capitalistic economics and corruption. The building up of a militant labor party is one of the most important necessities of the labor movement. In this work the League is doing yeoman service. It is carrying the fight on this issue into local and national unions everywhere and defeating the reactionaries. One of its most important propaganda feats was the taking of a referendum vote on the subject of independent working class political action, among 35,000 local unions. The further progress of Labor in this country awaits the development of a great party of the working class.

The Trade Union Educational League is bitterly opposed to the policy of national isolation set up by the reactionary labor bureaucracy in Washington. Mr. Gompers is so lily-white capitalistic that he refused to continue association even with the pale-pink Amsterdam International of Trade Unions. The latter made some mild statement which he interpreted as socialistic. That was enough. He immediately issued a manifesto denouncing it and withdrawing our affiliation. Consequently our movement stands isolated from association with the workers of Europe and the world. On the basis that capitalism is world-wide in scope and that the fight of the workers, to be successful, must therefore encompass the toilers of every nation, the Trade Union Educational League demands and is working for the affiliation of our labor movement to the fighting organization of the world's workers, the Red International of Labor Unions.

A new type of militant leadership for the labor movement is another plank in the general platform of the League. As things now stand in the trade unions, the leadership is a disgrace and a tragedy to the workers. Our present trade union officials, with few exceptions, are overbearing and tyrannical with the workers and subservient and timid towards the capitalists. They are overpaid, unimaginative, ignorant, and all too often, corrupt. They must be replaced by fighters, men

who know what the class struggle is and who have the courage to fight it through to its inevitable conclusion. The raising of the standard of American labor leadership is one of the greatest tasks being undertaken by the League.

THE LEAGUE ORGANIZATION

The Trade Union Educational League is based upon the principle of organizing the militants in all mass trade unions, A. F. of L. and independent alike. Its policy is the reverse of that of the old-time dual unionists who advocated pulling the militants out of these masses and forming them into little separate groups. The League is not a dual union in any sense of the word. It is purely an educational organization. It issues no membership cards, collects no dues, and gives out no charters. To join it all that is necessary is to belong to some mass labor union, accept the principles of the League, and subscribe to its official organ, *THE LABOR HERALD*. This journal, published monthly, is one of the best in this country; it is brimful of timely articles, bristling comment and international labor news.

The system of organization adopted by the League follows the industries in its general make-up. In each industrial center it has a group whose members are drawn from the different craft unions in all industries. These local general groups carry on the educational work generally in the various centers. Nationally, in the several industries there are also committees. These have been described elsewhere in this pamphlet. They encompass all the militants in their several industries and superintend the work of education. Further the League divides itself into four districts, Eastern States, Central States, Western States, and Canada. Conferences are held from time to time by each of the National Industrial Sections, and also by the four districts. The League itself holds general conferences yearly. The organization is financed by voluntary contributions of individuals and local unions, by the sale of literature, and through the Sustaining Fund.

Every worker who has his own best interests at heart and who understands the problem of the labor struggle should join hands with the League. It is a forgone conclusion that there is no hope for the American working class organized as it now is. We are at the absolute mercy of the bosses. Owning the jobs and controlling the Government they can sit back and dictate the terms of work. Our organizations, political and industrial, are too weak to withstand their wills.

The whole movement must be reorganized and regenerated according to the League's plan. This fact is so self-evident that one can hardly imagine intelligent workers holding off for long from starting into this work of preserving and building up the labor movement. We have come to a parting of the ways. One way, the way of inaction, leads surely to "open shopism" and slavery. The other, the way of militant activity, leads to stronger organization and finally to freedom. It is up to us. We hold our social destiny in our own hands.

Militants!

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and Labor's progress generally.

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