

*Labor unions - Communist
party influence
problem*

Vol. II
1949

REDS IN TRADE UNIONS

by

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No. 3
July 22
RECEIVED

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RICHARD M. BOECKEL, *Editor*

**Editorial Research Reports
1205 Nineteenth Street, N.W.
Washington**

REDS IN TRADE UNIONS

WITHIN the last two years America's two great trade-union federations—the A. F. L. and the C. I. O.—have become prime movers in efforts to rid the labor movement of Communist influence. When the Taft-Hartley Act was passed in 1947, labor leaders voiced strong objections, not only to the law in general, but particularly to the provision designed to force union officers to execute non-Communist affidavits. Labor resentment at being singled out for such special treatment has not lessened. Nevertheless, trade union leaders have been taking increasingly vigorous steps to clean their own houses and have been cooperating to combat Communist infiltration of international labor groups. The full results of such efforts will become clearer during the coming autumn, when the C. I. O. holds its annual convention at Cleveland and when the constituent assembly of a new non-Communist world labor organization meets in Western Europe.

The executive board of the C. I. O., meeting May 17-19 in Washington, gave notice to left-wing officials of affiliated unions to comply with convention and executive board instructions and support C. I. O. policy or resign from the executive board. The United Farm Equipment and Metal Workers, allegedly Communist-dominated and accused by the board of carrying on "anti-democratic activities," was ordered to merge with the United Auto Workers or face revocation of its charter.

The executive board was implementing and extending decisions made at Portland, Ore., last November by the full C. I. O. convention. In a resolution aimed at some of the smaller left-wing affiliates, the convention had empowered the executive board "to investigate the situations involving these affiliates of the C. I. O. which have failed to make substantial progress in organizing the unorganized, and to take such appropriate action with respect to such affiliates as may be . . . necessary to bring about effective organization of the

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working men and women within the jurisdiction of these affiliates." President Philip Murray declared that he was "not going to protect . . . small cliques of men whose interests are promoted and propagated by the *Daily Worker* and the Communist Party." William Z. Foster, chairman of the Communist Party, commented later: "No A. F. L. convention has surpassed the November 1948 convention of the C. I. O. in wild, reckless red-baiting."¹

U. S. LABOR'S SUPPORT OF NEW WORLD LABOR GROUP

The C. I. O.'s 1948 convention also authorized the officers and executive board "to take whatever action in relation to the W. F. T. U. and the international labor movement as will best accomplish C. I. O. policies and objectives." Belief that the World Federation of Trade Unions had become the tool of Soviet delegates and their Communist allies led the executive board at its May 1949 meeting to vote to withdraw from the W. F. T. U. and join a new world organization.

Prior to a conference held at Geneva, June 25-26, to prepare for establishment of the new organization, the A. F. L. had adhered firmly to the position that only one federation should represent American trade unionists in international bodies. In 1910, long before the advent of the C. I. O., the A. F. L. joined the International Secretariat, which in 1913 was renamed the International Federation of Trade Unions—a group to which the C. I. O. never belonged.² When the W. F. T. U. was organized in 1945, the A. F. L. refused to accept membership. Its refusal was due in part to insistence by A. F. L. leaders that the Russian delegates did not represent free trade unions, but the fact that the C. I. O. was already taking part in the W. F. T. U. was an additional reason for non-participation by the A. F. L.

The Geneva conference to discuss a non-Communist federation attracted 127 representatives of 47 million trade union members in 35 countries.³ Places were given to both the A. F. L. and the C. I. O. on the commission of 14 which is to prepare a constitution for the new body.⁴

¹ Foster, *The Twilight of World Capitalism* (1949), p. 72. Foster is one of the 12 Communists indicted July 20, 1948, on charges of advocating overthrow of the government by force. Illness forced severance of his case from that of the other Communist leaders now on trial in New York.

² The I. F. T. U. became inactive during World War I but was reorganized with A. F. L. participation in 1919. The A. F. L. dropped out in 1921, fearing radical tendencies, threats to autonomy, and an unfair dues burden, but it rejoined in 1937. The I. F. T. U. dissolved in 1945 after formation of the W. F. T. U.

³ The United States was represented by the now independent United Mine Workers as well as by the A. F. L. and C. I. O.

⁴ The organizing convention is scheduled to meet in November.

Radicals in United States Labor History

COMMUNIST CLUBS are known to have existed in New York City in the 1850s, within ten years after the publication of the *Communist Manifesto* in 1848. After the formation of the International Working Men's Association (the First International) in 1864, several "sections" of Marxists were organized in the United States. Radical designs were popularly attributed to the Knights of Labor, which began in 1869 as a secret society with elaborate titles and ritual. The organization showed spectacular gains in membership and influence in the mid-1880s during a series of successful strikes. Among the factors contributing to the subsequent rapid decline of the Knights was the public revulsion affecting all radical and labor groups after the Haymarket riot in 1886.

Samuel Gompers, as well as several other founders of the A. F. L., was at first a Socialist, although he later became the prototype of modern "business unionists." More prominent as a Socialist was Eugene V. Debs, who formed the American Railway Union and led the Pullman strike of 1894. Debs was jailed for disobeying a federal injunction. As perennial Socialist presidential candidate, Debs received almost a million votes in 1920 when he was again in a federal prison.

At its peak the most feared radical labor organization of this century was the Industrial Workers of the World, formed in 1905 by the militant Western Federation of Miners, Daniel DeLeon⁵ of the Socialist-Labor Party, William D. Haywood, and other intellectuals and trade unionists. The "Wobblies" rejected the conservative motto "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work" and adopted the Marxist slogan "Abolition of the wage system." The I. W. W. inspired terror in large parts of the country through its violent strikes and syndicalist philosophy. Before the I. W. W. lost its vigor in the 1920s, 19 states had adopted criminal syndicalism laws.

COMMUNIST "BORING FROM WITHIN" DURING THE 1920s

The present Communist organization in the United States arose in September 1919 when two factions of the Socialist

⁵ Lenin once called DeLeon the only American who had made any significant contributions to Marxist thought.

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Party secretly formed the Communist Party and the Communist Labor Party. As a result of efforts of the Communist International, the two groups effected a partial merger in 1920 and appeared openly as the Workers' Party in 1921. As public pressure relaxed, the name was changed to the Workers' (Communist) Party and later to the present Communist Party of the United States.⁶

Trade union activities of the party were directed by William Z. Foster, a native American radical who was converted to Communism in 1921. He had been associated with the Socialist Party, the I. W. W., the Syndicalist League, and the impressive but abortive organizing campaigns in the steel and meat packing industries prior to 1920.

The Trade Union Educational League was formed in 1920 with Foster as secretary to develop a left-wing labor movement. An official statement issued in 1922 summarized its aims and program:

Instead of advocating the prevailing shameful and demoralizing nonsense about harmonizing the interests of capital and labor, it is firing the workers' imagination and releasing their wonderful idealism and energy by propagating the inspiring goal of the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of a workers' republic. . . .

During its period of greatest influence in the early 1920s the T. U. E. L. infiltrated into many A. F. L. unions. Benjamin Gitlow, a prominent Communist at that time who later left the party, stated in *The Whole of Their Lives* that the Communists became important factors in the following unions: Amalgamated Clothing, Bakery & Confectionery, Barbers, Boot & Shoe, Carpenters, Fur Workers, Jewelry Workers, Ladies Garment Workers, Machinists, Painters, Pocket Book Workers, Shoe Workers Protective, Tailors, Textile, Typographical, and the Railroad Brotherhoods. All this took place at a time when the paid-up membership of the Communist Party approximated only 20,000.

The United Mine Workers narrowly escaped capture by the Communists. According to Gitlow, the miners had been selected by Moscow as the central point for trade union activity, and the campaign had been financed by an initial contribution of \$100,000. The Communists charged that John L. Lewis averted defeat at the 1924 convention only through fraudulent counting of ballots. The Mine Workers in 1927 added the Communist Party to a list of organizations to which U. M. W. members were forbidden to belong.

⁶ See "Communism in America," *E. R. R.*, Vol. II, 1946, p. 789.

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A "reorientation" in T. U. E. L. policy toward independent unionism began, according to Foster, in 1928 with the organization of new unions in mining, textiles, and the needle trades. In the following year the name of the organization was changed to the Trade Union Unity League and the program was revised to call for "organization of the unorganized into industrial unions independent of the A. F. L."⁷

COMMUNIST ASSISTANCE IN BUILDING OF THE C. I. O.

The shift of Communist international policy to the "United Front" program of cooperation with other forces opposed to Fascism coincided with the big organizing drive of the C. I. O. under John L. Lewis. The Communists, unsuccessful in their efforts to form mass industrial unions on their own, entered the C. I. O. campaign with enthusiasm. Lewis did not have in mind an assault on the capitalist system, but, in the period of the Popular Front, neither did the Communists. A biographer of Lewis describes the alliance as a "marriage of convenience" which soon "acquired some of the flavor of true romance."⁸

The advantages of the alliance to Lewis were obvious. The Communists had a "disciplined, fanatical organization with widespread labor contacts and with an intellectual front of considerable influence." For Lewis this meant "a reservoir of volunteers experienced in labor agitation who would gladly face grave personal danger to carry the gospel of industrial unionism to the proletariat."⁹

The Communists still take pride in their part in establishing the C. I. O. The labor editor of the *Daily Worker* wrote recently, "When the big organizing drives of the C. I. O. got under way in steel, rubber, electrical, auto, textile, marine and other industries, the C. I. O. found it necessary to rely to a great extent on the army of devoted and trained left-wing fighters, many of them Communists."¹⁰ Lewis was able to retain the support of Communist groups and was widely acclaimed in the left-wing press throughout his presidency of the C. I. O. But when Lewis continued to oppose intervention in the war after the German invasion of Russia in June 1941, the Communists resumed their pre-C. I. O. attacks.

⁷ William Z. Foster, *American Trade Unionism* (1947), pp. 179-180.

⁸ James A. Wechsler, *Labor Baron* (1944), p. 124.

⁹ Marilyn S. Pitzels, "Can American Labor Defeat the Communists?" *Atlantic Monthly*, March 1947, p. 29.

¹⁰ George Morris, *Where Is the C. I. O. Going?* (1949).

Recent Communist Activity in Labor Field

STUDENTS of Communism generally agree that Communist international policy has passed through seven basic phases, which have been reflected in the foreign policy of the Soviet Union and in the tactics of Communists in trade unions. Martin Ebon, in *World Communism Today*, has described and dated the seven phases of the party line as follows:

1. 1918-1920: Immediate world revolution.
2. 1921-1927: Agitation instead of armed revolt.
3. 1928-1934: Revolutionary extremism as protection for Russia; Stalin's concept of "socialism in a single country" established.
4. 1935-1938: United Front; Communists cooperated with other groups against Fascism.
5. 1939-1940: "Imperialist War"; period of Nazi-Soviet pact.
6. 1941-1945: United War Effort.
7. 1946 and after: National revolutions; extension of Stalinist concept of "socialism in one country."

The first phase was the period of the "Red scare" and the "Palmer raids" in the United States. It was marked by organization of the American Communists as a revolutionary party. The second phase was almost coterminous with Foster's Trade Union Educational League and its "boring from within." In the third period the American Communists made their attempt to build independent industrial unions through the Trade Union Unity League. The strategy of the United Front called for cooperation in establishing the C. I. O. The period of the Nazi-Soviet pact was one of pacifist agitation and opposition to war preparations.

In the years of the United War Effort, the Communists were among the foremost supporters of labor-management cooperation and the no-strike policy. The Communist Party of the United States was dissolved and replaced by the Communist Political Association in 1944. *Fortune* published an article (November 1943) on cooperation at the Emerson Electric Company between an admitted Communist, William Sentner of the United Electrical Workers, and W. Stuart Symington, then president of Emerson and now Secretary of the Air Force. "Emerson has enjoyed the best labor relations in St. Louis," *Fortune* observed.

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The Pacific Coast maritime unions, some of which are frequently accused of Communist control, did not have a single work stoppage involving as many as 1,000 workers from 1941 through 1945. In the years 1934-1940 there had been 19 such stoppages, and in 1946-1947 there were 12. The "Stalinist-minded" officials of Harry Bridges' Longshoremen's Union were roundly condemned by non-Communist trade unionists for refusing to support the Montgomery Ward strike in 1944, one of the few during the war to be widely endorsed by labor groups.¹¹

Saddling Earl Browder with "the grave responsibility for the opportunist errors and mistakes committed in the recent period," a national convention reconstituted the Communist Party of the United States in July 1945. A convention resolution declared: "The opportunist errors which we were committing adversely influenced our work during the war, limited the effectiveness of our anti-fascist activities, and were disorienting the Communist and the progressive labor movement for the postwar period." In November 1945 Foster, who had succeeded the erring Browder, viewed as a favorable opportunity for Communists "the tremendous wage campaign, which threatens to develop into a gigantic strike movement, arraying millions of workers in the basic industries against the greatest trusts in the United States."

LABOR UNIONS ACCUSED AS COMMUNIST-DOMINATED

A report on "The Communist in Labor Relations Today," issued by the Research Institute of America in March 1946, made a general classification of labor organizations that designated as "left-wing" 16 C. I. O. unions, some of which have eliminated or diminished Communist influence since 1946. Five other C. I. O. unions were listed as "probably left-wing" and six more as "problem" unions or "disputed." No A. F. L. national unions were found by the Research Institute to have significant Communist leanings, but several locals, especially in New York City and Los Angeles, were said to contain active left-wing groups.

It is difficult in some instances to determine whether a union is actually Communist-dominated. A few union presidents whose opposition to Communism is unquestioned, notably John L. Lewis and Philip Murray, have persistently refused to file non-Communist affidavits under the Taft-Hartley Act. But other unions whose officers have signed the affidavits, including the C. I. O. Farm Equipment Work-

¹¹ Sidney Lens, *Left, Right and Center* (1949), p. 132.

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ers and the United Office & Professional Workers, are frequently charged with Communist domination. Max Perlow, secretary-treasurer of the United Furniture Workers, announced on June 4 that he had quit the party in order to file an affidavit. The Food, Tobacco and Agricultural Workers, which also has been assailed as Communist-dominated, decided on July 8 to comply with the Taft-Hartley requirements.

Subcommittees of the House Committee on Education and Labor, reporting on investigations made in 1948, charged extensive Communist infiltration of labor organizations in the fur industry and in the distributive trades in New York City, and in the C. I. O. United Electrical, Fishermen's, Longshoremen's, and Marine Cooks and Stewards' unions. In addition, the House Un-American Activities Committee reported the presence of Communist officers in the United Public Workers and Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers unions. Sen. Butler (R., Neb.), discussing on June 21 the proposed grant of statehood to Hawaii, asserted that Communists, operating through the Longshoremen's Union, controlled a majority of organized labor in the islands, were responsible for the shipping strike that began May 1, and had even been able to dominate the Hawaiian Democratic party organization.

A basic list of left-wing C. I. O. unions currently accused of varying degrees of Communist penetration would include the ten whose leaders met June 26 to denounce the Truman administration's "scandalous betrayal" of campaign pledges to repeal the Taft-Hartley Act. To these ten could be added the Longshoremen and the Fishermen, whose representatives voted against anti-Communist measures at the May meeting of the C. I. O. executive council. All 12 were on the April 1948 list published by the anti-Communist newsletter *Counterattack*. Names of the unions, with available membership figures from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, are shown on the next page. The *C. I. O. News* estimates that these unions can claim about 10 per cent of the total C. I. O. membership of 6,000,000.

Walter Reuther has complained several times in the past year of factionalism in the U. A. W. due to the presence of Communists, and he has mentioned Communists among the possible shotgun assailants of himself and his brother. *Counterattack* does not consider the C. I. O. Packinghouse Workers to be Communist-controlled but does believe that President Ralph Helstein dominated the recent convention

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LEFT-WING C. I. O. UNIONS	<i>Reported membership</i>
American Communications Association	
Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers	600,000
Farm Equipment and Metal Workers	
Fishermen and Allied Workers	25,000
Food, Tobacco and Agricultural Workers	
Fur and Leather Workers	
Furniture Workers	44,114
Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union	75,000
Marine Cooks and Stewards	7,000
Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers	108,625
Office and Professional Workers	70,000
Public Workers	86,000

with the aid of a Communist coalition. The president of the largest left-wing union, Albert J. Fitzgerald of the Electrical Workers, astounded many listeners at last fall's C. I. O. convention by declaring: "I tell you frankly I do not give a damn for Russia. I tell you frankly that I think Vishinsky and Molotov are engaging themselves in saber rattling and war mongering."

The biggest Communist stronghold in the A. F. L., according to *Counterattack*, is the New York City Hotel Trades Council, with 60,000 members. Communist infiltration is also mentioned by *Counterattack* in locals of the Painters Union, Building Service Employees, and the Bakery and Confectionery Workers. None of the A. F. L. unions is currently accused of Communist control at the national or international level.

REDS IN WORLD AND FOREIGN LABOR ORGANIZATIONS

The World Federation of Trade Unions fell completely under Communist control upon withdrawal of the C. I. O. and the British Trades Union Congress. Even after these major defections, according to *Labor Fact Book 9*, a left-wing publication, the W. F. T. U. still represented more than 60 million workers in over 70 countries. Additional withdrawals may be expected as plans for the rival federation progress, although some countries, such as France and Italy, probably will be represented in both groups. A meeting of the W. F. T. U. has been scheduled for November in Peiping, in the Communist sector of China.

Before the split occurred in the W. F. T. U. this year, anti-Communists had been able to muster a majority in

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plenary sessions, but Soviet delegates and their friends gained control of the information bulletin and the executive bureau. Disputes had arisen between the two blocs over such questions as the admission of the International Trade Secretariats and the organization of trade unions in Germany. James B. Carey, C. I. O. secretary-treasurer, has stated that "the issue that really killed the W. F. T. U., however, was the Soviet attempt to use it as an instrument of propaganda against the Marshall Plan."¹²

Powerful Communist-led labor groups continue to exist, outside Eastern Europe, in France and Italy. The General Confederation of Labor in Italy claims more than 5,000,000 members. A one-hour nation-wide general strike, called in April 1948, was a disappointment, and the government was able to break another general strike in July 1948 following the shooting of Communist leader Togliatti. But more than a million farm hands responded to a 24-hour strike call on June 15, 1949. The French General Confederation of Labor staged an eight-week strike in the French coal mines last fall. When the Communist leadership called the strike off, the government insisted that 90 per cent of the miners had already returned to work. The C. G. T., however, remains a strong political and economic force in France.

The British Labor Party has become increasingly anti-Communist. At its conference in June at Blackpool, the Labor Party voted almost seven to one to expel Konni Zilliacus, self-labelled "pragmatic semi-Marxist," and Leslie J. Solley, another left-wing member of Parliament. Britain's largest trade union, the Transport and General Workers, on July 11 banned Communists from holding office. The Labor government has blamed the current London dock strike on Communist leadership in the local unions. The Australian Government raided Communist Party headquarters, July 8, in an attempt to prevent funds from reaching 24,000 striking coal miners. In Japan the fear of a Communist-inspired "summer labor offensive" caused the Labor Ministry on July 10 to prohibit political activities by trade unions.

¹² Carey, "Why the C. I. O. Bowed Out," *Saturday Evening Post*, June 11, 1949.

Place of Marxism in the Labor Movement

TRADE UNIONS are referred to again and again in Marxist literature as "schools of socialism." A. Lozovsky, writing in *Marx and the Trade Unions*, stated that Marx considered the trade unions first and foremost as "organizing centers, centers for collecting the forces of the workers, organizations for giving the workers an elementary class training." While Marx emphasized the revolutionary role of the trade unions, he feared their conservative tendency to concentrate on immediate economic objectives. In an address delivered in 1865, Marx said:

Trades Unions work well as centers of resistance against the encroachments of capital. They fail partially from an injudicious use of power. They fail generally from limiting themselves to a guerilla war against the effects of the existing system, instead of simultaneously trying to change it, instead of using their organised forces as a lever for the final emancipation of the working class, that is to say, the ultimate abolition of the wages system.

Lenin had to contend with the views of "Left doctrinairism" regarding collaboration with "reactionary trade unions." Scorning the opposition to such collaboration as an "infantile disorder," Lenin urged Communists, if need be, "to resort to all sorts of stratagems, artifices, illegal methods, to evasions and subterfuges, only so as to get into the trade unions, to remain in them, and to carry on Communist work within them at all costs."¹⁸ The program of the Communist International adopted in 1928 set down the same strategy for trade union penetration:

It is particularly important, for the purpose of winning over the majority of the proletariat, to capture the trade unions, which are genuine mass working-class organizations closely bound up with the everyday struggles of the working class. To work in reactionary trade unions and skillfully to capture them, to win the confidence of the broad masses of the industrially organized workers, to change and "remove from their posts" the reformist leaders, represent important tasks in the preparatory period.

Marxist writers do not make clear the position of trade unions when Communism finally arrives. In the Soviet Union, according to Stalin, they are not party organizations.

The trade unions may be termed the all-embracing organization of the working class which holds power in our country. They con-

¹⁸ Lenin, "Left-Wing" Communism, an Infantile Disorder (1920).

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stitute a school of Communism. They promote from their midst the best people to carry out leading work in all branches of administration. They form the link between the advanced and the backward elements of the working class. They unite the masses of the workers with their vanguard.¹⁴

In the Soviet constitution, trade unions are given the right to nominate candidates for political office, along with Communist Party organizations, cooperatives, youth organizations, and cultural societies.

METHODS USED BY COMMUNISTS TO CONTROL UNIONS

Communist Party membership in the United States was placed at 56,000 in the 1949 edition of the Soviet publication, *Agitators Information*. In none of the unions alleged to be Communist-dominated—with total membership aggregating more than half a million—is it believed that a majority of the rank and file are Communists. Small “fractions,” working with incredible diligence, have been able to capture and maintain control of large national organizations.

When Joseph Curran forced a showdown in the National Maritime Union in 1947, he estimated the number of party members in the N. M. U. as only about 500 out of a total of 80,000. Nevertheless, Curran stated to the N. M. U. convention, “107 of the 150 elected officers of your union are Communists who are more interested in assuring that your union becomes a stooge of the Communist Party than they are in keeping it an instrument belonging to the rank-and file seamen who built it.” In a crucial test vote at the convention, Curran was sustained, 353 to 351.

Communist tactics are discussed in a pamphlet written by Karl Baarslag, Americanism director of the American Legion and former chairman of the Radio Officers Union, (A. F. L.).¹⁵ Through command of parliamentary procedure and shrewd dispersal of the Communist “fraction” in the form of a diamond, according to Baarslag, the small minority is able to gain effective control of local union meetings. Poor attendance of members at most union meetings facilitates control by an active Communist group.

Keeping in the good graces of important non-Communists has been utilized as a major device to retain influence

¹⁴ Stalin, *Problems of Leninism*.

¹⁵ Baarslag, *Communist Trade Union Trickery Exposed* (1949). Similar studies are included in the U. S. Chamber of Commerce pamphlet *Communists Within the Labor Movement* (1947) and the Research Institute of America report on *The Communist in Labor Relations Today* (1946).

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at the national level. U. A. W. President Reuther has described the effectiveness of such tactics:

During the 12 years the U. A. W.-C. I. O. has existed as an international union, the Communists have placed only one party member in the top leadership and only two of the faithful on our International Executive Board. Yet they have prospered in our midst until recently, because they so skillfully cultivated persons who could be made, in some degree, to serve their purposes. It was through clever manipulation of such people that the Stalinists acquired an influence in the U. A. W. vastly disproportionate to the numbers of their convinced adherents.¹⁶

Another technique—that of embarrassing anti-Communist officials—has been cited as the reason for the recent strike over a “speed-up” at Ford plants. International officers were forced to endorse the strike, and, after a settlement was reached, they were accused by Communists of shameful betrayal.¹⁷

REASONS FOR THE APPEAL OF COMMUNIST PROGRAMS

Left-wing unions have had some of their greatest successes in organizing maritime workers. In the past two decades Harry Bridges of the Longshoremen has become a symbol of radical union leadership in the United States. The new International Union of Seamen and Dockers, a left-wing federation formed in Marseille with W. F. T. U. support, unanimously elected Bridges president on July 18.

A report of the Congressional Joint Committee on Labor-Management Relations in 1948 explained the constant strife in the West Coast maritime industry as follows:

The industry has attracted the individualist, the nonconformist, the floater without roots in the community. Employment both ashore and afloat has been highly casual, and little effort has been made to achieve a stable employment relationship. Personnel policies and attitudes of the employers were delinquent until unions forced a change. These conditions, together with bitter employer resistance to self-organization of the workers, forced a militant, aggressive, left-wing type of leadership to power in the unions. Some of these leaders have maintained themselves in power by overemphasizing the opposing areas of self-interest of workers and management.

A congressional subcommittee investigating Communist infiltration into the fur industry last year offered a similar explanation: “It was the employers’ use of every means

¹⁶ Walter Reuther, “How to Beat the Communists,” *Collier's*, Feb. 28, 1948, p. 45.

¹⁷ *Counterattack*, June 3, 1949.

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for union busting and subjugation, including physical violence, that created the opportunity for the present type of officers to take over the leadership of the workers."

Without selling their long-range revolutionary program to more than a few thousand workers, Communists have been able to gain positions of power through militant prosecution of local grievances and vigorous pursuit of the short-run aims of wage earners. They conduct political agitation for the advancement of Negroes and other minority groups, for repeal of restrictive labor legislation, for higher unemployment compensation and social security benefits, for more housing, for almost any government action likely to be popular with wage earners.

At times the Communists can boast of success as "business unionists" in obtaining greater wage increases than non-Communists. George Morris, labor editor of the *Daily Worker*, scoffed recently at the "statesmen" in the anti-Communist C. I. O. Textile Workers Union who advised local unions not to press for wage increases this summer. Ben Gold's Fur and Leather Workers' Union, Morris claimed, had already obtained fourth-round increases for half of the 50,000 tannery and leather workers it represents and improvements for many in its fur division.

Any relaxation of pressure by anti-Communist union leaders is an invitation to criticism. In his pamphlet *Where Is the C. I. O. Going?* Morris said of Philip Murray: "A leader who denies class division must, sooner or later, deny the necessity of struggle by labor and must come to the conclusion, as Murray does, that the interests of a union can best be served through a policy of servility to employers or, as some choose to call it, 'labor-management cooperation.'"

BASIS OF OBJECTIONS TO COMMUNIST LABOR ACTIVITY

The contention that Communist infiltration into trade unions is a cause for public concern and preventive governmental action arises from fear that successful infiltration could constitute a powerful revolutionary force. Former Communist Benjamin Gitlow describes the aim of Communist leaders as follows:

Among Communist leaders, control of the trade unions encompasses a realization that union control in the hands of the Communists enables them to keep a loaded shotgun at the head of the government by using the economic and political power of the organized workers. Once the Communists gain decisive control of the

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country's trade union movement, the Communists have virtually established a *de facto* government of their own. A push of a button on the ninth floor of Communist Party headquarters on 13th Street could then silence the wheels of industry and halt transportation on land, over the sea and in the air. . . . That is what the Communists are after in their fight to become the masters of the trade unions.¹⁸

A subcommittee of the House Labor Committee reported that the West Coast shipping strike called by Harry Bridges in 1948 "was conducted largely for political reasons and specifically in an attempt to injure the Marshall Plan" and "that this strike affected aid to China, the entire Pacific area, and also Alaska." The strike at Allis-Chalmers in 1941 was attributed by the House Labor Committee in 1947 to Communist opposition to the defense program during the period of the Nazi-Soviet pact.

Non-Communist trade unionists and non-Stalinist radicals are among the bitterest opponents of Communist infiltration. A union leader like John L. Lewis, who has supported the Republican Party and is content to struggle with mine operators in a capitalist arena, resents efforts to make his union the vehicle for introducing a new social order. A trade unionist who laments the passing of "uplift unionism" insists that the Stalinists are extremely vulnerable on the question which most concerns the American proletarian: "Does my leader fight for my best economic interests?" He indicts the Stalinists on two charges:

1. They do not consider the welfare of the American worker as primary, but on the contrary will sell out his interests to preserve the Stalinist world machine, just as quickly as any "labor skate" will sell out his membership to preserve his individual hide; and
2. The Stalinists are not revolutionary, but reactionary.¹⁹

Another frequent point of attack by trade unionists is the status of the trade union in Soviet Russia. An article in the *New Leader* (Mar. 13, 1948) describes the Stakhanovite movement as a glorification of the speed-up and piece work. *Trud* is quoted as stating that the purpose of labor organizations in the Soviet Union is to "strengthen labor discipline and promote maximum efficiency." A decree of June 28, 1940, is cited as requiring "forced penal labor at their place of employment" of workers who stay away from work without acceptable cause.

¹⁸ Gitlow, *The Whole of Their Lives* (1948), p. 120.

¹⁹ Sidney Lens, *Left, Right and Center* (1949), pp. 215-216.

Decline of Communist Influence in Unions

DETERIORATION of Soviet-American relations since 1945 has been accompanied by a substantial decline of Communist influence in the American labor movement. The power of Communist elements has been broken in several major national unions. Insurgent anti-Communist factions have been formed in others and purge efforts by unions themselves have been stimulated by government action of various kinds.²⁰

The Taft-Hartley Act (Sec. 9h) provides that the National Labor Relations Board may not receive from any labor organization a petition for an election, an unfair labor practice complaint, or a petition for a union shop referendum

unless there is on file with the Board an affidavit executed contemporaneously or within the preceding twelve-month period by each officer of such labor organization and the officers of any national or international labor organization of which it is an affiliate or constituent unit that he is not a member of the Communist Party or affiliated with such party, and that he does not believe in, and is not a member of or supports any organization that believes in or teaches, the overthrow of the United States Government by force or by any illegal or unconstitutional methods.

As of July 1, 1949, 98 of the 106 A. F. L. unions and 34 of the 40 C. I. O. unions, in addition to 54 independents, were in full compliance. The number of local unions and officers in compliance has varied considerably due to the necessity of annual renewal; some locals allow the affidavits to lapse if they have no immediate need for N. L. R. B. services. The number of affidavits on file on July 1 stood at 86,100, the number of local unions in compliance at 9,073.

The Joint Committee on Labor-Management Relations reported, Dec. 31, 1948, that "elimination of Communist partisans and adherents from official posts and positions of responsibility in both national and local unions is one of the most pronounced and significant effects" of the Taft-Hartley Act. The affidavit provision has affected Communist-led unions in several ways. Admitted Communists have been advertised as such because they could not sign the affidavits. Without N. L. R. B. protection, some unions like the United Electrical Workers have been vulnerable to "raids" by unions

²⁰ See "Control of Communism in the United States," *E. R. R.*, Vol. I, 1948, pp. 91-106.

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which are in compliance. Four officers of the C. I. O. Farm Equipment Workers resigned in protest when compliance was favored in a membership referendum. Six locals of the C. I. O. United Public Workers shifted to the C. I. O. Marine and Shipbuilding Workers Union.²¹

GOVERNMENT PRESSURES ON RADICAL UNIONISTS

Failure of union officials to sign non-Communist affidavits has been used by the Atomic Energy Commission as the basis for an administrative order forbidding recognition of two left-wing unions. Chairman Lilienthal last September told General Electric and the University of Chicago not to deal with U. E. and U. P. W. locals in the plants they operate under government contract because of alleged Communist association. In July 1946 the War Department announced that it had discharged five officers of the U. P. W. from positions at the Ordnance Proving Ground at Aberdeen, Md., in the interest of national security.

Attempts have been made to deport some union officials as alien Communists. John Santo, former director of organization for the C. I. O. Transport Workers Union, left voluntarily for Europe in June after resisting deportation. Bridges, who since 1939 has thwarted several efforts to force his return to Australia, was indicted May 25 on charges of perjury and conspiracy to violate the naturalization laws. The indictment charged Bridges with swearing falsely that he was not a member of the Communist Party when he was naturalized in 1945. Two other officials of the Longshoremen's Union were indicted at the same time. Another left-wing labor leader, Irving Potash of the Furriers Joint Council, C. I. O., is among the Communist leaders currently on trial in New York.

Attempts of congressional committees to bring about punishment of Communist labor leaders on perjury and contempt charges received a setback on June 28 in the Supreme Court ruling in the Christoffel case. Harold R. Christoffel, former left-wing leader in the Allis-Chalmers local of the U. A. W., had been convicted of perjury for testifying that he was not a Communist. The Supreme Court reversed the conviction by a 5-to-4 vote because a quorum of the committee had not been present when Christoffel testified.

²¹ Max Perlow of the C. I. O. Furniture Workers announced in June that he had quit the Communist Party to comply with Taft-Hartley. He said he still believed in the party's principles, which he insisted did not include overthrow of the government by force.

Editorial Research Reports

ACTION BY UNIONS TO CURB LEFT-WING ELEMENTS

The U. A. W. was the first major C. I. O. union to go through a battle between left and right after the war. In March 1946 Walter Reuther defeated R. J. Thomas for the presidency of the union by a close vote, but he failed to capture the executive board from the left faction led by Thomas, George F. Addes, and Richard T. Leonard. Aggressive action within the organization, however, enabled Reuther to win re-election decisively in November 1947 and to gain control of the other major offices and the executive board. At the U. A. W. convention at Milwaukee in July 1949, Reuther was again swept into office by a 12-to-1 margin. The convention adopted almost unanimously a Reuther-supported resolution calling upon the C. I. O. to withdraw the charters of left-wing affiliates.

Joseph Curran succeeded in breaking Communist power in the National Maritime Union during a convention in the autumn of 1947. On one crucial question he was sustained by a margin of only two votes. By forcing through a constitutional change which increased the voice of the membership and then winning in a referendum, Curran removed the N. M. U. from the left-wing list. Michael Quill of the Transport Workers Union, who broke with the Communists in the spring of 1948 and was subsequently rebuffed by his executive board, nevertheless pushed through an anti-Communist slate at the December 1948 convention.

Important state and city C. I. O. councils were removed from left-wing domination in 1947. Victories were scored by anti-Communist forces in the following state councils: Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. Before the C. I. O. convention in November 1948, the executive council revoked the charter of the New York City C. I. O. council for "slavish adherence" to the Communist line.

Opposition forces in the United Electrical Workers are hoping to regain the presidency of that union for James B. Carey, now secretary-treasurer of the C. I. O. Albert J. Fitzgerald, left-wing but non-Communist president of U. E., was defeated in June by his own local in Lynn, Mass., in a bid for convention delegates. Fortified with increased powers by a convention this spring, the international officers of the Hotel & Restaurant Employees are attempting to purge the New York City Hotel Trades Council, reputed to be the principal Communist stronghold in the A. F. L.