

The Program of the T.U.U.L.

By Ben Gitlow

THE Program of the Trade Union Unity League should be a document for rallying the workers, organized and unorganized, for militant struggle against their exploiters. It should primarily be a program for immediate struggle against the bosses and their agents in the labor movement. It should tie up the immediate demands of the workers with the revolutionary struggle against capitalism.

This is not done by the Program of the T.U.U.L. It fails completely in its approach to the American workers. Those who wrote the Program do not understand the American working class. The program is a guide (not a correct one) to Communists, the most class conscious workers in the United States. It is written for them and not for the workers that must be won for the T.U.U.L.

The overwhelming majority of the American workers have not yet developed to the point of class consciousness. By the millions they continue to vote for the Republican and Democratic Parties. They are influenced and enslaved by the bourgeois ideology of the powerful capitalist press of the United States. They are more deeply interested and more conversant with a prize fight, a football game and a baseball game than they are with the economic and political problems that affect them so vitally.

The Mechanical Appeal to the Program

To mechanically transfer the phraseology of a Comintern thesis to the Program of the T.U.U.L. does not serve to attract these masses but rather to establish a wide gulf between the T.U.U.L. and the workers it seeks to win.

This mechanical approach to the T.U.U.L. Program is best illustrated by the part dealing with Mondism. Mondism is the adaptation of American rationalization to British industry. The name *Mondism* was derived from the fact that—Sir Alfred Mond, a British capitalist, was the outstanding advocate of rationalization in England, insisting that it was necessary for British industry to adopt the American methods and latest technique if Great Britain was to survive as a leading imperialist power. To the American workers Mondism is so much Greek. But the speed-up, the stretch-out, mass production, class collaboration, company unionism, the conveyor system, etc., all the features of rationalization, are well known. To use the name of Mond who is unknown to the American workers instead of Ford and the system of rationalization he represents is folly.

The Abstractness of the Program—De Leonism

The Program of the T.U.U.L. should be a program of immediate struggle. It must be a fighting program for the workers in American industry, organized and unorganized. This it is not. It is too abstract and general for this purpose. How can the Program successfully lay down a program for immediate struggle if it fails to analyze the present economic developments in the United States and the relation of the class forces today? In other words what concretely will be the issues of struggle, where will the struggles take place and in what industries? The abstractness of the T.U.U.L. Program as a program-of-action for the United States in spite of its length is due to this serious shortcoming. The program is not the living, fighting program it should be.

DeLeonism, the essence of American opportunist sectarianism, never worried about a living trade union program. Its program of "revolutionary industrial unionism" was a blue print to

serve under all conditions and for all times. This program is still cherished by the Socialist Labor Party as a relic. It represents no vital living mass movement. After all, it is not blue prints we are after but living, fighting movements.

False Estimation of American Imperialism

The Program of the T.U.U.L. is full of errors in its estimation of American imperialism. For example it states:

"Child labor is still rampant in a country producing such vast masses of commodities that it cannot find markets to consume them."

In the first place this is absurd because child labor made its appearance with the very birth of capitalism. Secondly, this view of a deep crisis in the United States due to the inability of United States imperialism to find a market for the products manufactured by the industries underlies the whole analysis of U. S. imperialism in the Program. It is un-Leninist and wrong because it holds that the contraction of the domestic market is the reason for imperialist war—a theory rejected by Lenin and fought by the Comintern. The facts as I have already stated disprove this. United States imperialism is driving headlong towards war on account of its very strength; on account of its ability to expand its markets for manufactured goods and finance capital it is sharpening the antagonisms between it and its imperialist rivals.

False Theory of Rationalization

The wrong theory of rationalization contained in the program is the explanation of unemployment due to rationalization. The program states on this point as follows:

"Although these workers are willing to work and are in urgent need of commodities of all kinds, the chaotic capitalist system can give them no work because it cannot find markets for the great surplus values they produce over what they receive in wages."

Precisely the opposite is the cause of unemployment due to rationalization. Rationalization produces an army of permanently unemployed not because of a contraction of the domestic market and the inability of the workers to buy back what they produce. The facts do not bear this out. The speed-up and mass production have created a large permanently unemployed army of workers precisely at a time when the home market expanded and the export trade increased. We now have as a result of rationalization big unemployment during periods of the greatest production of commodities, during periods of so-called prosperity. This is due to the speed-up, to the minute division of labor, to the intensive savage, energy-consuming exploitation of the workers, that are the features of rationalization.

The Imperialist Offensive Against the USSR.

Another gem is the following in the program:

"But the most fundamental of all the antagonisms which create the danger of international war is the attack of the foreign capitalist countries upon the Soviet Union."

Nothing could be more misleading and confusing. World capitalism is hostile to the Soviet Union. It is preparing an imperialist attack upon the First Workers Republic in the world. It is not a question of *native* or *foreign* capitalist countries nor is it a question of the *native* Soviet Union and the *foreign* capitalists outside. It is rather the international solidarity of the workers the world over on behalf of the Soviet Union, the center of proletarian revolution and working class

power against world imperialism against the attacks of the imperialist powers. We, as proletarian revolutionaries, must see to turn such an imperialist attack on the part of the imperialist powers into international proletarian solidarity, into a civil war against the bourgeoisie into a world revolution for the complete overthrow of world imperialism.

Rationalization and War Preparations.

Another serious shortcoming of the program is its failure to see that the very intensification of rationalization is part of the war preparations of the imperialists. In the entire section on rationalization this is omitted.

Imperialism and the Labor Aristocracy

The analysis of the trend of development of the various sections of the working class stands in direct antithesis to the Leninist theory of the bribery of the upper stratum of the working class by imperialism. Lenin wrote in his book on *Imperialism* as follows:

"The drawing of monopolistically high profits by capitalists of one of the many branches of industry, or of one of the many nations, enables them economically to bribe separate strata of workers, and temporarily even a considerable minority of them, thereby drawing them into supporting the bourgeoisie of a given branch of industry or a given nation against the bourgeoisie of all other nations. The increased antagonism between the imperialistic nations over the division of the world strengthens this tendency."

But the T.U.U.L. program becomes "exceptionalist" as far as this Leninist theory holding good for the United States. It states the following:

"The A.F. of L. Program of basing the labor movement upon the skilled workers, a policy that was always wrong, is made increasingly disastrous and futile by the wholesale elimination of skill in the industries through standardization, specialization, mechanization and a thousand other devices and efficiency systems. The A.F. of L. is founded on the diminishing labor aristocracy; the new unionism bases itself upon the expanding masses of unskilled and semi-skilled who are the decisive factor in modern industry."

All the program can see going on within the American working class is the elimination of skill and the diminishing, or in other words, the disappearing labor aristocracy.

But United States imperialism is the richest, most powerful in the world today. It is the leading imperialist power. Yet, according to the T.U.U.L. Program, it seems unable to bribe a minority of the workers to make them supporters of American imperialism against the revolutionary working class movement at home and against other imperialist nations. This is not Leninism. This position of the T.U.U.L. is opportunistic and sectarian. America today, because United States imperialism enjoys the position of leadership and power, thru its fabulous super-profits has the most numerous and most strongly knitted labor aristocracy. This accounts to an extent for the lack of class consciousness among the American workers. This accounts for the fact, that the A.F. of L. is such a dangerous instrument of social-reformism. This objective fact, fully in line with correct Leninist theory, the T.U.U.L. Program fails to see because it seeks to give up completely the struggle for the united front from below and the struggle inside the A.F. of L. and reactionary unions.

The Struggle in the A. F. of L.

Further proof of this is the following phantastic conception in the Program:

"The day of craft unionism has gone forever in American industry; the day of militant industrial unionism is here."

The day of craft unionism is gone forever! What intellectual rubbish! The A.F. of L. is based upon craft unionism. It is therefore gone forever. How simple! How unique! Then

why worry about the A.F. of L.? Why such tirades about something that is gone forever? The sad truth is that the A.F. of L. bureaucracy is *not* gone. It is here with its poisonous influence upon the workers. It remains a powerful agency of U. S. imperialism. The craft unions that compose it continue to serve its purposes of betrayal of the workers interests and subserviency to capitalism.

But the T.U.U.L. leaders from W. Z. Foster down do not cherish the fight against these agents of imperialism in the ranks of the workers. Foster did not fight them in the last imperialist war. He deserted the revolutionary workers and became part and parcel of Gompers' imperialist crew. So now, run away from the reactionary unions! Don't continue to struggle inside of them! This is rank opportunism and sectarianism. "Craft unionism is gone," says the Program. In the language of the street: "Not so that you can notice it!"

False Estimation of Radicalization

The T.U.U.L. Program, moreover, has a completely wrong estimation of radicalization. When it speaks of the workers going over to an *offensive* against the capitalist exploiters it is exaggerating the growing discontent and radicalization of the workers. There are no facts to prove this contention. The facts prove that the workers have not yet in America gone over into a general offensive against the capitalist exploiters.

The Muste Group

As far as the estimation of the Muste group, the Program fails to see the two-fold character of this movement. The Musteites are a wing of the Socialist Party and of the reactionary trade union bureaucracy. It seeks to keep the workers away from militant action and revolutionary unionism by misleading them with empty reformist left phraseology. It thus seeks to keep them in the ranks of the A.F. of L. under the influence of the *reactionary* bureaucracy. In this respect it is a reactionary capitalist force in the labor movement. But at the same time, we must recognize that its birth is due to the growing discontent and leftward drift of the trade union masses and unorganized workers in certain industries. Our task, the task of the T.U.U.L., is to develop united fronts from below on concrete issues that will expose these Musteite misleaders to the rank and file and help us to win these masses for the T.U.U.L. This kind of concretization is missing entirely in the T.U.U.L. program.

One of the main shortcomings of the Program is its failure to analyze the character of the industrialization of the South, with the rising new proletariat there and the new problems it raises for the revolutionary working class. On the basis of such an analysis a concrete program for the South should have been contained in the T.U.U.L. Program.

The Program fails to deal adequately with the problem of unemployment.

There is a superficial approach to the Negro problem.

The developing political class consciousness of the working class is neglected. Not one word is contained in the whole Program on the need for the organization of a *Labor Party*.

The burning question of wage cuts is sadly neglected. No concretization of demands and slogans to meet the wage cutting movement of the capitalists can be found.

The demand that the United States government recognize the Soviet Union is omitted.

The fight against injunctions is not to be found any place in the Program!

The Program of the T.U.U.L. must be radically revised away from anarcho-syndicalism, away from DeLeonism, away from opportunist sectarianism, if the T.U.U.L. is to be built up into a living vital revolutionary center of the organized and unorganized masses in the United States.