

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

By Ben Gitlow

HOW can one best characterize the Program of the Trade Union Unity League adopted at the recent Cleveland Conference? It seems that the best way would be: *a crude muddle resulting from a mixture of anarcho-syndicalism and pseudo-Communism*. After carefully analyzing the TUUL program one wonders what has happened to Leninism in this country. One feels that now as never before it is necessary to bring to every militant worker the great lessons embodied in Lenin's pamphlet *The Infantile Sickness of "Leftism" in Communism*. Now as never before is it necessary to get a firm grip on the essential ideas of Leninism so that the "new leadership's" brazen revision of the role of the trade unions, of the difference between the masses and the officialdom, of the tactic of the united front and the basic principles of our trade union activity will meet with sharp resistance.

The Program of the TUUL is not at all the program of a trade union center which has for its purpose the mobilization and organization of the workers for militant struggle for their immediate interests against the bosses and the bosses' agents in their own ranks (the trade union bureaucracy, reformists, etc.). In its structure the program it practically ignores the basis of the trade union movement, the everyday economic struggles of the workers. In its structure and content it follows almost identically the lines of a Communist Party program.

The Program looks upon the American working class as largely a homogeneous mass already developed to a point where it is so radicalized that it is ready to accept a Communist role and activity for the trade unions. The best proof of this is what the Program itself states:

"They (the new unions) aim to sharpen, deepen and unite the scattered economic struggles of the workers into a general political struggle aiming at the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of a Workers and Farmers Government."

This sentence sums up the whole basis of the TUUL Program. It proves that the "new leadership" simply does not understand the role of the trade union movement or of a trade union center. It is a resurrection of the old syndicalist outlook of Wm. Z. Foster, brought back to life in a veiled form. In 1924, when the Foster group was in control of the Party, it proclaimed that the aim of the Trade Union Educational League was "the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat". At that time, however, the Communist International quickly corrected this error and put us on the right road, while at the present the false anarcho-syndicalist line emanates directly from the new leadership of the Eccei itself.

Such an outlook and policy leads straight to isolation from precisely those workers who are ready for militant union action in their everyday struggles but who are not yet ready for the full Communist program. Precisely in the United States, where the working class has still to develop class-consciousness, is such an outlook dangerous. Yet this is the position of the TUUL—and of the Party—today. To make the proletarian dictatorship the basis for the organization of the TUUL is to narrow it down to a closed sect of Party members and the very closest sympathizers. Such a position leads not only to the isolation of the left wing from the masses but *makes impossible the organization of the left wing itself*.

Let us examine this question more closely, for it is the key to the whole TUUL program.

Says the Program: the aim of the new unions is to sharpen,

deepen and unite the scattered economic struggles of the workers into a general political struggle aiming at the abolition of capitalism. But this is precisely one of the main tasks of the Communist Party whose role it is to develop the economic trade union struggles into a general political struggle for the overthrow of capitalism. To attribute such a role to a trade union center is nothing short of syndicalism.

To organize a trade union center on the basis of the general political struggle for the overthrow of capitalism is—to put it mildly—to see the American working class not as it really is but as it imagined to be—so rapidly moving to the left that it has already left behind the German, French, and English workers so far that it is ready not only for Communist trade unions but for the proletarian dictatorship as well.

The present position of the Party and of the TUUL is pure and simple left sectarianism against which Lenin fought so energetically.

"Millions of workers in England, France and Germany who were not organized heretofore have, for the first time, entered the simplest, most elementary and most easily accessible form of organization—for those still imbued with bourgeois democratic prejudices—namely, the trade unions. And the Left Communists who stand by, crying 'The masses the masses!' and refuse to work with the trade unions, refuse on the pretext of their 'conservatism', and contrive new, spick-and-span 'Workers Unions, . . . These 'Workers Unions' they claim, will be (will be!) all-embracing and for participation in them the only (only!) requirement is 'the acceptance of the Soviet system and the dictatorship of the proletariat'. A greater lack of sense and more harm to the revolution than this attitude of the 'Left' revolutionists cannot be imagined. Why, if we in Russia, after two and a half years of the incredible victories over the Russian bourgeoisie and the Entente, had demanded that entrance into the trade unions must be conditional upon the 'acceptance of the dictatorship, we should have committed a stupid act, impaired our influence over the masses, and helped the Mensheviks. For the whole of the Communist problem is to be able to convince the backward workers, to work in their midst, and not to set up a barrier between us and them, a barrier of pendant childish 'Left' slogans."

—Lenin: *Infantile Sickness of 'Leftism'*.

(In his next article Comrade Gitlow will continue his analysis of the TUUL program, taking up the points in detail.)

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