

# United Labor Front Dodged at Chicago

By ARNE SWABECK

The delegates attending the conference, called by the authorized committee of the sixteen standard railroad unions, on February 20, in Chicago, who anticipated fusion into a single labor party pledged to independent political action, were disappointed. It produced little in the way of positive results.

Thruout the sessions this question was skillfully avoided by the dominant majority,—the heads of the big international unions, of which some were present in person and others represented by their devoted lieutenants.

## They Spoke About It

All spoke of the unity of labor's forces, each using his own interpretation, but when seriously approached or when definite lines of unity was proposed by some of the "honest-to-god" delegates, the majority block remained unshakably silent. They had no authority to act and could not commit their organizations.

Preachers and rabbis, speaking on behalf of the absent "public," con-

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ferred their blessing upon the conference, its aims and purposes, followed by broken down A. F. of L. leaders, who had been rewarded for their "faithful" service in the labor movement with comfortable political jobs, social patriots speaking for the Socialist Party, and farmers.

With deep emotion, Chairman Johnston, International President of the machinists, said in his best salvation army style:

"If ye have faith even as a grain of mustard ye could move mountains."

## Calls It "Unwise"

True, they were all out to "lay the foundation of a great movement, having for its purpose the restoration of our government to the people."

But, as a chairman Johnston put it, "it would be unwise to even consider the formation of a new political party. Let us coalesce and work thru existing organizations."

"And so, the conference resolved to issue another puny call for labor to "punish its enemies and reward its friends."

The present economic crisis and its attendant terrible unemployment is the whip that is being used to force the working masses into submission in the general attack to destroy unionism.

Organized capital has become aggressive in its fight to demolish the barriers set up by the workers against the violent onrush of the capitalist forces.

The courts, the police—the heavy artillery of the state has been brought into play. The guns have roared in West Virginia, in the New England textile districts, in the packing house centres in Newport, Ky., and elsewhere, at the dictate of the masters.

## Labor Is in Retreat

The old method of bribing labor officials has become almost superfluous because labors' forces are on the retreat everywhere.

Yet the rank and file is slowly awakening and becoming restless. Here and there voices can be heard, demanding that something must be done.

All this is enough to make the "or" leaders, who call themselves progressive and are able to sense that something is in the air, sit up and take notice. Their organizations are at stake, and what is more, their leadership is at stake.

In order to forestall the rank and file taking the initiative themselves and following the more conscious and determined amongst them into aggressive action against the oppressive conditions, which perhaps would result in real unity of the working-class, these leaders hasten to show that they are on guard and only looking out for the best interests of the workers while they take care not to go any farther than the safety of their jobs demand.

## Says Coalition Is Inevitable

The fusion of all labors' forces into a single American Labor Party, each retaining its autonomy and the right to criticize the programs and tactics of the others, is inevitable.

The conference could not agree on a program or declaration of principles. It chose to reaffirm the old "glorious" document: The Declaration of Independence and agree upon its various grievances, set forth in a document called an "Address to the American People."

The Plan of Action, adopted by the conference, shows a little more sign of vitality. It recommends that all forces represented in the conference organize joint committees within each state, congressional district, county and municipality—that they unite for the purpose of securing the nomination and election of senators and representatives to Congress, etc., in the coming election of 1922, who are pledged to the interests of the producing classes and to the principles of genuine democracy in agriculture, industry and government.

## Demonstrate Failure Again

It provides for a general committee of fifteen who shall co-operate and assist the local organizations in the coming election, is empowered to employ organizers and publish literature and shall call a conference on the second Monday of December.

To that conference are invited all such organizations, bodies and persons as are in accord with the purposes of the conference.

The joint committees in the several states have free hands to support any candidate they may see fit, regardless of what party he belongs to, if he pledges himself to the interests of the producing classes, in the coming election. Something that all candidates do.

This will mean that all the organizations who are urged to unite for this purpose will do about the same thing which they have for so long attempted to do with no success at all, and the rank failure of such policies will undoubtedly be clearly demonstrated at the time the next conference meets.