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# The First Convention of the International Workers' Order, Inc.

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The International Workers' Order was officially established March 31, 1930, but the Order was first organized and began to function the 1st of July [1930]. The first 3 months, April, May, and June [1930] were given towards the organizing of the central and local apparatus and to examining thousands of members. We had to prepare the legal side of the Order, so that in the beginning of June, the National Office was first ready to send the bills to the branches and on the 1st of July [1930] we began to function and pay sick and death benefits.

We are therefore justified in reckoning that at the time of the convention the Order will be only 11 months old. What did we accomplish in these 11 months?

We have in that short time organized 225 branches, which are found in 31 states and 80 cities with a membership nearing 12,000.

This is a colossal achievement. We must not forget that the International Workers' Order was organized at a time of large unemployment, in the year of the economic crisis which has had no equal in the history of the United States. The depressing economic conditions in many cases prevented thousands of workers from joining our Order due to the fact that they did not have the dollar which is the required fee for a doctor's examination.

The extent to which the depression has affected

the workers is shown by the fact that over 1,000 members of our Order have let themselves be dropped from the membership because they could not pay their bills and the Order did not have the chance to organize

such apparatus in the branches which would be able to lend the sum of the bill to these members.

Certain causes and mistakes that the National Executive will reveal are the reasons for the Order not having reached the full quota of 15,000 members in its first year. This does not, however, in any way minimize the importance of our accomplished work and our first successes.

We have paid out in the period of 10 months, beginning with July 1930 and ending with May 1st,

1931, the sum of \$22,747.00 sick benefits and we still have in our reserve fund \$51,571.43.

We are stressing this fact not because we want to point out how wealthy we are, but because we want to point out that the International Workers' Order is fully able to accomplish its task as a fraternal organization.

In the first year we organized medical departments in New York and in Chicago, which became medical centers for our members. Lately we have also organized a dental department in New York. Here, we have also a specialists department.

The base of the International Workers' Order is



a fraternal one. It functions as a mutual aid organization, which the American working class is so much in need of. However, the Order is not concerned with its fraternal functions only. It tried to become and is now an important part of the revolutionary working class movement. Today already the International Workers' Order plays an important role in the working class movement.

How did the Order in such a short time come to occupy such an important place in the workers' movement?

The manifesto, which the first convention published, declared that the International Workers' Order is an integral part of the working class movement and in that year the members, the branches, and the leading sections have by their activities shown that they are which they professed to be. The Order has actively taken part in the mass struggles. Not only has the Order endorsed the Unemployment Insurance Bill, but the branches and the members have collected signatures for the bill, they have participated in the unemployed demonstrations and the hunger marches. A large portion of the branches and district committees have participated in the election campaign, led by the Communist Party. In a certain measure the branches have participated in the anti-war demonstrations. In New York and in other centers the members of the Order were quite a large part of the May Day demonstration. We can say that we have not sufficiently participated in these activities, that we could have taken a greater part in these struggles, that we could have drawn in more members, more branches. But on a whole, the Order has taken an active part in the class war.

The Order has become an important instrument for the workers' movement also financially. The branches have collected nearly \$7,000 for the Dress-makers' strike; nearly \$5,000 for the central organ of the Communist Party, *The Daily Worker*; nearly \$25,000 for the Jewish daily Communist paper, the *Freiheit*, which became the organ of the International Workers' Order, not only because the first convention endorsed it, but because it was the most important factor in the process of building the International Workers' Order. The branches have also participated in the campaigns of the ILD, WIR, Icor, and other important organizations which serve the working class.

The International Workers' Order is coming to

the convention with 80 children's schools in which 6,000 children are given a working class revolutionary education. We are not taking the credit for building the school movement. The schools have existed before under the name of Non-Partisan Workers' Children's Schools, but it would not be entirely true if we would say that we did not help build the schools. The active leaders in the schools are also active in the Order.

If the International Workers' Order has not build the schools, it has strengthened them all over the country and has given them new perspective, new power, and new contacts.

Thanks to the International Workers' Order, we have been able to fulfill, after the convention of the schools, an important task by carrying through the school tax, which enabled us to publish some readers used for the New Project Method of education and which strengthened the ideology of the schools.

The schools have become an important part of the International Workers' Order. Through the amalgamation we do not intend to shrivel the school movement, but rather to enlarge it as an important mass organization. The International Workers' Order should become the base for the widening of the school movement.

One of the most important problems for our Order is the problem of rebuilding the branches. The National Executive through the District Committees has been carrying on an extensive campaign against the "Fraternalism" and we can note some important accomplishments in this task.

An important accomplishment in our cultural work is the publishing of our monthly magazine, *The Spark*. *The Spark* has really become an important factor in our worth, notwithstanding its shortcomings. There must be found a way to connect our official organ more closely with our organizational life. That will undoubtedly be done at the convention.

We have done little work in drawing the women into our Order. Only a beginning has been made here and there and we come to our convention with only 4 women's branches. This is not enough. The problem of drawing in the working women into our organization is a very serious one. This beginning should teach us how to come with greater accomplishments to our coming conventions.

One of our positive accomplishments is the fact

that we have in the first year organized 16 youth branches and 31 other language branches, among which are found Italian, Ukrainian, Greek, Portuguese, Mexican, and other language branches; while it is true that the youth branches form only a small part of the 12,000 members — not even a thousand members. The importance lies in the orientation of the National Executive that the order must be built as an International Workers' Order, not only in name, but in reality. We must therefore not forget the important task of building non-Jewish branches, sections in other languages. Of historical importance is the work done to amalgamate the fraternal movement.

In the United States, the classical country of the fraternal movement, there are hundreds of fraternal organizations in various languages with millions of members. At certain periods bitter struggles in the fraternal movement arose. In a large number of organizations the struggle for a class ideology ensued, perhaps without a clear and concrete conscience by their members or by their leaders. All these struggles did not bring the proper results, mostly because they were always localized. One part of the fraternal organization, say the Jewish one, did not know anything about the Hungarian. The Hungarian did not know about the Latvian, Slavic, Russian, etc. Each part was for itself and the result was that they could not mean much for the revolutionary workers' movement, and they did not and could not play an important part in the class struggle in this country.

The first convention of the International Workers' Order called for the amalgamation of the fraternal organizations, and here also we have shown that slogans are not enough. We carried on extensive propaganda, brought the problem before the other fraternal organizations, and so we are now able to report to this present convention that the Hungarian Sick Society has unanimously, at their convention, decided to accept our recommendation for amalgamation with the International Workers' Order. This problem of amal-

gamation is now before the Slovak Workers' Society and the Russian Sick Society. Both organizations expect to have their conventions in September [1931] and it is almost certain that they too will accept our recommendation for amalgamation and to the coming convention we will have a united fraternal class organization which will consist not only of these 4 sections, but of new sections which will be organized in the process of building the International Workers' Order.

Considering the total of our accomplished work, we must say that the International Workers' Order has in the first year of its existence accomplished positive results and has rooted itself firmly in the ground. We come with a record of work which we must not minimize.

This year's work shows us that in general, the line of work of the International Workers' Order was correct. We have had mistakes here and there. In certain fields we have not done as much as we would have liked to. We did not develop new leaders in the branches, City and District Committees, and the national organization. In this respect we are very much behind. We have not fashioned new methods of work in our organizational work. We have still not been able to combine our campaigns with the campaigns of the workers' movement, although we have made much progress in this respect. When we compare the accomplished work with the unaccomplished work, we must declare that the first year of work has shown that the International Workers' Order is on the way to a large mass organization. At a time when the general fraternal movement is going backwards, we have favorable perspective for our Order.

The first convention of the International Workers' Order will accept the general correct line, in the light of constructive self-criticism, abolish the drawbacks in our work, reveal the weak points, and strengthen our position for a united Class Order in the fraternal movement in this country.

*Edited by Tim Davenport.*

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