

Pattern Makers, Sheet Metal Workers, Electrical Workers, Elevator Constructors, Foundry Employees, Stationary Engineers, Stationary Firemen, Metal Polishers, Stove Mounters, Auto and Air Craft Workers, Mechanical Engineers and Draftsmen, Jewelry Workers, Watch Makers, and many other organizations of minor importance.

All these unions, going a hundred and one different ways simultaneously, create confusion worse confounded. Consider for a moment a group of musicians, with violins, drums, horns, clarionets, harps, bells, etc., and each performer playing whenever he felt like it, quitting whenever he wanted to, with one playing jazz music, while another rolled off a classic piece by Wagner. Under such circumstances one would deem the musicians fit only for an insane asylum. Yet craft unionism is just as foolish, with one union striking while the others stay at work, and never co-operating on anything, except when they engage in a fight among themselves.

This situation must be changed. We must, so to speak, develop an orchestra in which each individual plays his part, where each remains a unit, but nevertheless a section of an intelligently directed machine. Just as an orchestra is brought together to produce wonderful results in harmony, so must the metal trades be brought together. Working as a unit, yet functioning as crafts for technical reasons, they can be combined effectively into a scientific, unified organization.

A Mighty Organization

All the metal trades must be combined together. To give an idea of what a tremendous organization this would create, all that it is necessary to do is to examine the 1920 census. These show the enormous battallions of labor that are eligible to such a union:

Machinists	801,901
Millwrights	37,669
Tool Makers, Diemakers, Diesinkers	55,092
Molders, Brass, Iron, etc.	123,681
Pattern Makers	27,720
Blacksmiths, Forge, Hammer, Welders	221,421
Boilermakers	74,088
Electricians	212,964
Metal Polishers, Buffers, Grinders	59,785
Metal Trades Apprentices	53,691
Jewelry Workers, all grades	83,753
Stationary Engineers	242,096
Stationary Firemen	143,875
Cranemen	37,888
Automobile Factory, semi-skilled	345,115
Gunsmiths	4,645
Semi-Skilled Mechanics	273,369
Machinery Oilers	24,612
Designers, Draftsmen & Inventors	70,651
Mechanical & Electrical Engineers	64,766
Agricultural Implement Employees	19,168
Car Shop, semi-skilled and helpers	151,622
Ship Building, semi-skilled and helpers	166,862
Iron & Steel Factory, semi-skilled & helpers.....	425,057
Semi-skilled, not specified	80,712
Electrical Supply Factories, semi-skilled	91,630
Other metal factory, semi-skilled	14,513
Tinware factories, semi-skilled	36,961
Lead and Zinc factories, semi-skilled	11,391
Brass Mill help	35,967
Painters in Metal Factories	50,356
Copper Factory Help, all kinds	13,879
Steel Workers, Furnace men, Smelter men, Heaters, Ladlers, Pourers, Puddlers, Blast Furnace Ladlers, Blast Furnace semi-skilled Help, Rollers, Roll Hands, Annealers and Temperers	421,237
Grand Total	4,476,137

These millions of workers are not organized because we are so blind that we have not yet constructed our metal trades unions so that they can be organized. Once united, this tremendous mass would have such enormous strength that they could soon put an end forever to the damnable conditions under which metal trades workers as a class now live.

Program of the Needle Trades

Preamble

At a period when the working class is being dealt heavy, crushing blows by the arrogant exploiters; when the unions led by partly corrupt and generally cowardly officials are succumbing one after another to the onslaughts of the capitalist class, the Trade Union Educational League is the only hope for a regeneration of the American trade union movement.

The League is uniting in its ranks the militant workers of all trades; those elements who alone are willing and

A Departmentalized Union

Misinformed persons believe that industrial unionism is a sort of crazy quilt or mulligan stew. This is a false conception. With a scientific plan of amalgamation, the crafts will not lose their identity. The general body would be divided into several sections, as follows, each of which, if necessary, would have a number of sub-divisions:

1. Steel Workers.
2. Machinery and Engine Builders.
3. Ship Builders.
4. Automobile Constructors.
5. Shop Crafts on the Railroads.
6. Jewelry and small instrument workers.

Such a departmentalized industrial union would be able to take care of the interests of the affiliated crafts far more efficiently than at present. Results already attained by amalgamation prove this conclusively. In Germany for instance, the metal workers are all in one union, which is highly departmentalized. Each craft functions alone in its own field, and yet by virtue of the fact that all the crafts are united in one industrial organization, with only one executive the whole of the 1,800,000 members can at a given moment be moved as a unit. Last year the German Metal Workers' Union signed agreements with 73,000 firms, covering all kinds of metal work from jewelry making to locomotive building. The interests of each craft were taken care of to the smallest detail. In America, where outside of the railroad shops we have scarcely an agreement at all, this wholesale signing up of the employers seems almost unbelievable.

The various former craft unions which amalgamated into the German Metal Workers' Union, had a multitude of insurance and fraternal features. To enumerate all the different schemes of dues, premiums, funeral and unemployment benefits, and others would make one dizzy. Yet these were all handled without the least friction, and at less than half the original cost, through a separate fraternal benefit department. Dare anyone suggest that American brains are not capable of an equal degree of intelligent organization?

The objection that amalgamation of the metal trades and railroad trades would split the crafts and break asunder various natural combinations of labor, is ridiculous. The metal workers, on the railroads for instance, would still be members of the metal workers' union. But they would also be affiliated with the railroad workers' union, paying part of their dues into both organizations. For example: machinists and blacksmiths leaving a contract shop and going on to a railroad to work, would merely transfer into a local of the railroad department, and thereafter, instead of all their dues going to the metal workers, part would be paid to the railroad workers. They would become part of the railroad industry, and while there would be subject to the jurisdiction of the railroad workers' union so far as strikes are concerned. But they would be primarily members of the metal workers' union. Both metal workers' union and railroad workers' union, would be benefitted by such an arrangement.

A Plan of Action

Amalgamation should become a burning question in the order of business at every local meeting of all the metal trades. In organizations having referendum, local unions must commence to place the various organizations on record. All delegates to the district and international conventions, should be instructed to have those conventions go on record for amalgamation. All candidates for international officers should be forced to voice their position on the question. When two or more unions go on record favorably, immediate action should be taken to see that they amalgamate. This will help move the more backward organizations into action. Let amalgamation be the question of the hour.

Metal tradesmen! Progress calls you to action. Concentration of capital, industrial development, are moving forward with terrific speed. Step on the throttle of amalgamation. Get off the bumpy road of craft unionism, and enter upon the broad boulevard of departmentalized industrial unionism.

capable of reorganizing the workers and stiffening their power of resistance. Its program of amalgamation is the crying need of the movement. It is absolutely right when it declares that the labor movement is confronted with the alternative of amalgamation or annihilation.

In the struggle against the reactionary leadership of the American trade union movement, the unions of the needle trades can play an important role. Composed as they are of a more class-conscious and militant element, they should set an inspiring example to workers in other industries. Before this can be accomplished, however, these unions them-

selves must be reorganized on a new basis and infused with a new spirit. To carry on this necessary work of reorganization; to further the agitation for the amalgamation of the unions in the industry and for the establishment of the shop delegate system; to make the workers of the needle trades realize that they have a vital part to play in the American labor movement;—that is the purpose and work of the needle trades section of the Trade Union Educational League.

Amalgamation

Why are we, the workers belonging to the Trade Union Educational League, in favor of the amalgamation of the unions in the needle industry? It is true that the unions in the needle industry have more of an industrial form of organization than the typical American trade union. In our industry there is no open scabbing of one craft upon another. The principle "one shop, one union," is already a fact. We are for amalgamation because we wish to extend this principle of "one shop, one union" to "one industry, one union."

The problems and interests of the workers in the needle trades are so closely bound together that there is absolutely no reason for the existence of more than one union in the industry and a crying need exists for our amalgamation into one powerful organization that can better protect and further our interests. That the interests of the needle workers are identical has been proved conclusively during the past few years. The victory of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers in their 44-hour week strike made it possible for all other needle trades to win this concession. On the other hand, the employers quickly took advantage of the defeat of the Furriers' strike in 1920 by attacking the other unions in the industry. The defeat or victory of one union reacts upon the other needle trades immediately. Their interests are one.

Amalgamation of all needle trades unions will greatly increase the fighting strength of the 350,000 workers in our industry. Amalgamation is a question of more power for the men and women engaged in making clothes. A really consolidated union of all the needle workers will prove to be a source of creative power for the good of the workers. Federation will not do. In fact, a loose alliance is a dangerous undertaking in the clothing industry. It would not add one iota of actual strength to the unions, but it would arouse the employers and stimulate an even greater degree of consolidation of their ranks. An alliance would provoke the employers to unite still further without giving a corresponding increase of power to the unions.

Federation as proposed by some of the union officials, may or may not be a step forward in the case of the typical American craft union. In the case of the needle workers, however, it is not a step forward. What is necessary, and what the situation demands, is a closely knit unification of all the needle trades.

Amalgamation of the needle trades will increase the strength of the general organization enormously. In times of industrial strife in any department, the employers will be faced with an array of power and determination to win which the unions now, acting separately, do not possess. The entire moral and financial strength of the unions would be thrown on the side of the workers, assuring their victory. Moreover, amalgamation of all the needle trades into one solid union will not only strengthen the needle trades themselves but will blaze the pathway for the amalgamation of all the other craft unions in other industries.

One amalgamated needle trades union, organized on the basis of the present lines of division, such as ladies' garments department, men's clothing workers, furriers, cap-makers, etc., with one central fund and one central staff in the national office, one district council of all trades in each district—would eliminate waste, duplication of effort, overlapping of administration, and make the union generally more effective.

To bring about this amalgamation the militants in every local union in the industry must begin to agitate for the calling of a special convention of all the unions in the needle trades, which shall formulate definite plans for amalgamation. Representation at such a convention should be on the basis of at least one delegate for every 5,000 members.

Shop Delegate System

The present form of local organization in the needle trades has outlived its usefulness and can no longer serve the purposes of militant unionism. The numerous local divisions tend to cause dissension in the ranks of the workers and to develop in them a spirit of local patriotism which is detrimental to the workers as a whole. The local union as the unit of organization might have served a useful purpose when the unions were first organized and the membership small. But now the local unions are largely political clubs and mostly lifeless. Usually a local with a membership of 10,000 can boast of no better attendance at meetings than

from 100 to 200. Through the local union meetings only a small fraction of the membership actively participates in the affairs of the organization. As a result it becomes possible for a group of paid officers to usurp all power. To the average worker the interests of the shop are distinct and separate from the interests of the union. The union is to him too often merely an office where he pays compulsory dues.

To establish a closer bond between the shop and the union, to arouse the initiative and individual activity of the rank and file, to transfer the power from the hands of the paid officers into those of the workers in the shops, and to abolish not only the local but also the craft divisions,—the present system must be changed and the shop delegate system established in its place. With the shop as the basic unit of the organization, the union will be conducted and controlled by the rank and file.

What is the shop delegate system? Under this system the workers at their regular shop meetings elect committees which administer the affairs of the shop and act as representatives of the workers in that shop at local councils, consisting of a specified number of shop representatives. The delegates in these local councils formulate policies, elect and control officers to the higher units and report back to their respective shops, thus linking up the problems of the union with those of the shop. In this way the union becomes the true expression of the needs of the workers in the industry. The Needle Trades Section of the T. U. E. L. states as one of its principal goals the establishment of the shop delegate system.

Program of Immediate Demands

As active workers in the union and the shop who are faced with the daily struggle, we propose a program to improve the working conditions in the shop while we are agitating for the amalgamation of all our unions into one industrial unit and the bringing about of the shop delegate system.

Week Work:—We declare the speed-up system in the form of piece work to be a method introduced by the capitalist class in order to exploit the workers more effectively. The piece work system is injurious to the health of the workers, and the competition which results from it is destructive of their solidarity. We will fight unceasingly for the abolition of the piece work system.

Standards of Production:—The militants in the needle trades unions will fight any proposal of week work with a standard of production. We recognize this system as only a disguised form of piece work, which will not abolish the evils of piece work. "Week work with a minimum wage" is our slogan.

Consolidation of Locals:—There are entirely too many local unions in the needle trades. We stand for the unification of all the locals of one craft, such as operators, pressers, etc., and of all the locals of one trade, such as coat makers, dress makers, etc.

Employment Bureaus:—We advocate the establishment of employment bureaus in the unions of the needle trades to eliminate the present acute competition of the workers when they apply at the shops for jobs advertised in the newspapers. This will give the unions control over the jobs in the industry, as already has been demonstrated by the Amalgamated Clothing Workers.

Shop Chairman in an Advisory Capacity:—Realizing that only through the establishment of the shop delegate system can the present evils in our unions be eliminated, and as a step in that direction, we advocate the establishment of a shop chairman body to meet regularly and to act in an advisory capacity in the unions. We will also support all progressive measures in the unions, such as recall of officers, referendums, proportional representation to the higher units of the organization, etc.

Injunctions:—The American labor movement since its beginning has fought against the use of injunctions. The injunction is the most powerful weapon the exploiters are using to crush labor unions. The American workers must destroy that weapon. For any union to use the injunction or to recognize its legitimacy, as did the International Ladies' Garment Workers, in the recent cloak makers strike in New York, confuses the workers and weakens their fight against the injunction. We will use all our power to oppose the employment of the injunction by any union in the future.

To familiarize the workers in our industry with this program, and to make the measures advocated a fact in the life of our organizations, groups of militants must be organized in every local union. All these groups should work jointly for the purpose of carrying on the educational campaign effectively throughout every branch of the industry.

With this program, the Needle Trades Section of the T. U. E. L. comes to the workers in the clothing industry. We ask those who are serious in their desire to make the union a strong weapon in the class struggle, to join hands with us in the fight for a better, stronger union controlled by the rank and file.