

THE AGITATOR

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THE AGITATOR does not bear the union stamp because it is not printed for profit. But it is union, every letter of it. It is printed and published by unionists and their friends for the economic and political education of themselves and their fellow toilers. Much of the labor is given free. On the whole it is a work of love—the love of the idea, of a world fit for the free.

**The Laws among us fell discord create;
They teach us how to plot, to steal, to hate,
Why worship then their makers? Why obey
The Judges who on Mammon ever wait?**

ABU'L-ALA, Arabian Poet, tenth century.

SYNDICALISM IN FRANCE

II

(This is the first and only complete history of the great French labor organization, and we are glad to present it to our readers, especially at this time, when so much is being said and so little is known about syndicalism. The reader will observe the dissimilarity between the C. G. T. and any organization in this country. This history was accepted for publication as a pamphlet in Chicago eighteen months ago and has been pigeon-holed ever since. Syndicalism wont stay "put" any longer. —Editor.)

Functions of Bourses

Organization and Propaganda: The bourses organize by locality creating syndicats impartially in all industries. Once a bourse is founded in a locality there is no limit to its growth, until all the workers in its locality are organized into syndicats. These syndicats organize into craft and industrial federations. The bourses thus do organizing work that would be next to impossible for the federations to perform.

The bourses are peculiarly well fitted to organize local general strikes. A recent strike of this character was the one day general strike in Havre, as a protest against the sentencing to death of Durand; secretary of the Coal Heavers' Union. The bourses are veritable hotbeds of Syndicalist propaganda.

Employment Bureaus: The bourses are the employment bureaus of France. They keep the most complete statistics on the labor supply and demand to be had. All jobs are free. The bourses are widely patronized by employers and workers alike.

Viaticum: This is a system for materially aiding travelling members (some bourses also aid non-members) to stay in town a day or two to search for work. All bourses have the system more or less developed, some giving food and shelter, others money. The Paris bourse gives 50c. a day for two days. Many national federations have the "viaticum" also. A traveling member can secure, besides food and shelter, \$40 a year from the bourses alone. A C. G. T. card, grace to the viaticum, legally exempts its bearer from vagrancy charges. The "viaticum" is a favorite institution of French rebels.

Sou du Soldat: Literally, "The Soldier's Cent." Members in good standing summoned to do compulsory military service (two years) are allowed, usually \$1.00 every three months. The government pays the workers one cent a day as wages to kill workers and the bourses, or sometimes syndicats or federations pay them one and one ninth cents a day not to do so. This institution is cordially hated by the government and has been made the excuse for sending many militants to jail.

Judicial Council: The Paris bourse has a permanent judicial council composed of six doctors, six lawyers, six conseillers prudhommes (working class members of local arbitration courts) and six workers. This committee gives its services free to all working men injured at work: having damage suits against their employers: arrested during labor troubles, blacklisted, etc. It is a success and is hated by employers, legal and medical sharks alike.

Trades Schools: Many bourses have trade schools in which expert mechanics are employed to teach trades to boys. The "job trust" is not popular among French workers.

Cooperatives: Many bourses have cooperatives in production or distribution, but aside, usually, from their regular undertakings. To acquire property under capitalism is not one of the ideals of the bourses.

During severe strikes the local bourse takes charge of

the local strikers' children and portions them out to neighboring bourses, where they are taken care of while the strike lasts. The bourses often have strike, sick, death and out-of-work benefits, "soupes communistes," (common table during strikes) etc. Many of them have fine libraries and publish their own papers.

The bourses are the pride of French rebels. They are the source from which Syndicalism sprang and spread to the rest of the labor movement.

The C. G. T.

The federations and bourses are united nationally (colonies included) under the constitution of the C. G. T.; C. G. T. is composed of two sections. 1st: Section of Federations—the national alliance of all the federations. 2nd: Section of Bourses—the national alliance of all the bourses. The Section of Federations is the national organization of all the industries. The Section of Bourses is the national organization of all the localities. The national organizations of these two sections are known as the Federal, and Bourse Committees, respectively. (See diagram in 1st. article.)

Federal Committee

The Federal Committee located at Paris, is composed of one delegate from each federation. It has a "bureau" composed of Secretary, Treasurer, Archivist and assistants. The Secretary only (Leon Jouhaux, match worker,) is under salary. He gets \$50 per month. The principal functions of the Federal Committee are to enforce decisions of C. G. T. convention, to collect C. G. T. dues from federations, to carry on propaganda, to act as arbiter between federations, to create new federations or fuse existing ones. This latter is easy to do because there are but few "meal tickets" in the federations and no one, save the politicians, are interested in keeping them apart. During the past two years seven federations have been fused. Several more will soon follow suit. The C. G. T. convention of 1906 decided to admit only industrial federations in future. The powers of the Federal Committee are very limited. It serves simply as the channel thru which the autonomous federations keep in touch with each other. It meets twice per month. Cash on hand 1910, \$300.

Bourse Committee

The Bourse Committee, located at Paris, is composed of one delegate from each bourse. It has a "bureau," the same as that of the Federal Committee. The Secretary only (Georges Yoelot, compositor) receives salary. He gets \$50 per month. The Bourse Committee enforces C. G. T. convention decisions regarding bourses, collects C. G. T. dues, carries on propaganda, creates new bourses and develops those already existing. The regional type (mining district) is the ideal, and efforts are being made to reorganize bourses on this revolutionary type that ignores capitalist territorial lines. The Bourse Committee also collects very complete statistics on production, labor supply, working conditions, etc. in all parts of France. This it is able to do simply by compelling the thoro reports of the individual bourses. The Bourse Committee serves as the central point at and thru which the functions of the individual bourses complement each other and receive a national expression. It is non-dictatorial, the individual bourses retaining the completest autonomy. Bourses situated far from Paris usually select well known militants at Paris to represent them on the Bourse Committee. One delegate can represent three bourses. Meets twice per month. Cash on hand 1910 \$95.

Confederal committee

The Confederal Committee, located at Paris, consists of the combined Federal and Bourse Committees. At present it numbers about 140 members. Its "bureaus" consists of the combined "bureaus" of the Federal and Bourse Committees. The secretary of the Federal Committee, Leon Jouhaux, is also secretary of the Confederal Committee; also called secretary of the C. G. T.. No increase in salary. The treasurer of the Confederal Committee (Charles Marck, longshoremen) receives a monthly salary of \$50. Services of all other members are free except in case of special business. The "bureau" is elected by the committee after each C. G. T. Convention. Officers may succeed themselves. No quorum required at meetings. Confederal Committee meets regularly every three months, or on convocation of its "bureau." It elects from its ranks three committees of twelve each, six from each section. These are: Auditing, Official Journal ("Le Voix du Peuple"), and Strike and General Strike Committees. As the C. G. T. takes a non-political stand, there are no parliamentary committees nor lobbyists. Political discussion in the Confederal Committee meetings is prohibited.

The C. G. T. is the central point in the French labor movement; the point at which all the autonomous organizations are joined, and where the movement receives a complete class expression. In it are united, on the other hand, the national alliance of organized national indus-

tries (Section of Federations), and on the other, the national alliance of organized localities (Section of Bourses), The Confederal Committee supervizes the enforcement of the decisions of the C. G. T. Conventions, and acts as arbiter between the various affiliated organizations. Its decisions are binding until the following C. G. T. convention. Otherwise its functions are of a propagandta, solidarity and advisory nature. It is not in the least legislative and the humblest syndicat has the right to ignore its "orders."

As befits it, the Confederal Committee occupies itself chiefly with class issues. It scans very closely the laws, alleged to be in the interest of the working class, and wages a most vigorous campaign of agitation against them. It is a veritable hotbed of anti-military propaganda. In 1903 it organized a nation-wide campaign against the private employment offices, which resulted very largely in their suppression. In 1904 the C. G. T. convention decided to carry on an agitation for the general establishment of the eight hour day on May 1st 1906. The task of organizing this class issue naturally fell to the Confederal Committee. The agitation was so intense and wide-spread that the ruling class feared for its supremacy, and on May 1st had about 50,000 troops in Paris, and most of the Confederal Committee in jail. The jailing of rebels, the high cost of living and the numerous other class issues continually facing the working class, offer the Confederal Committee unlimited opportunity to perform its chief function of carrying on a strong revolutionary propaganda.

If it considers it necessary, as during the postal strike of 1909, the Confederal Committee can vote the general strike in all the industries. This power is only advisory, however, as every syndicat reserves to itself the right to decide whether or not it shall strike. During strikes, or other agitation, the Confederal Committee sends organizers into the localities involved. There are no regular organizers the best fitted for the particular locality being selected. These are paid \$3.00 per day or \$1.40 if holding a paid position. Street speaking is not practiced in France, the propaganda being carried principally by hall speaking and posters. The Confederal Committee in 1910 had a cash balance of \$2050.

W. Z. FOSTER.

(To be concluded)

GUSTAV HERVE IN 1907

As stated in last issue, Gustav Herve has changed his policy; he is now a politician, and against anti-parliamentary propaganda. Now, who can affirm that the statement written by him, Nov. 5, 1907, in "La Guerre Sociale" is a thing of the past and does not apply today as well as then? The article is as follows:

"THEIR MANIFESTO"

"A dozen reform socialists, all Congressmen and Councilors, receiving salaries of 15,000 and 6,000 franks a year, respectively, have now given birth to a 'manifesto'

"With other merits, they certainly have the one of boldness"

"They acknowledge their reformism. They proclaim themselves exclusive partizans of legal reform and enemies of 'revolutionary violence' "

"At last all is clear!"

"How many other politicians, those elected by the Socialist Party and those who aspire to be, have the same horror for the coming revolution?"

"A Social Revolution!!"

"Why? . . . Since we have the ballot as the means to make our ideas peacefully triumphant as soon as we have the majority!"

"And they give us this foolishness without laughing .

"If you will wait until you are the majority before applying the collectivist or communist system, you will wait a long time."

"Majority!"

"Do you not know then, that the opinion of the majority is made by the great public press, that said press is in the hands of the bankers and industrial barons?"

"Under a Monarchy or Republic, with the capitalist system, Parliament is a puppet show. The members are the dolls and High Finance, thru the Press, holds the strings."

"Parliament rules; Finance governs."

"To show us the glory of parliamentarism and the beauty of 'a peaceful and legal' transformation, these Congressmen and Councilors must consider the proletariat in general and the socialists in particular, as a flock of geese?"

"We have to repeat and repeat: The emancipation of the proletariat will not come thru the ballot, which can, at most, pension old workers and nationalize the railroads, but thru a violent revolution."

Is Herve mocking the poor devils now, and does he intend to raise himself to comfort and fortune on their shoulders, like all politicians? JULES SCARCEAUX.