

# AFL Progressives Should Speak Up

By William Z. Foster

It is high time that the pro-Administration forces in the AFL Executive Council and throughout the AFL, should let their voices be heard. The interest of the labor movement of our nation demands that they take a definite stand against the Wolls, Hutchesons, and Meany, who are writing policies for the AFL that have nothing in common with the interests of the great rank and file of the workers and the American people. A halt should be put to the reactionary maneuvers of these elements, and progressive policies worked out that correspond to the will of the membership.



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## A DISGRACE

The attitude of the Executive Council during the recent elections was nothing short of a disgrace. Here was the most important election in the history of our country fought out against a fascist-minded organized reaction trying desperately to seize control of the Government, yet the Executive Council brazenly adopted a phony "neutrality" policy that worked all to the benefit of Dewey and his gang. And it was so intended. The Council dared to act so in spite of the fact that a majority of that body were avowedly Roosevelt supporters, and at least 75 percent of the AFL affiliated organizations also repudiated the pro-Dewey policy of the Executive Council and came out openly for Roosevelt.

What emphasized still more the lack of AFL progressive leadership in the election campaign was the fact that, outside of Dan Tobin and one or two others, the pro-Roosevelt members of the Executive Council kept their mouths shut and left the rank and file to battle it out as best they could with the dangerous Dewey forces.

The showing of the progressive pro-Administration forces in the recent New Orleans convention of the AFL was, if possible, even worse. This was one of the most reactionary conventions in the history of the AFL. It was no less than a scandal, and it directly violated the progressive will of the AFL rank and file. Much of the policy presented in the convention by the Executive Council, which was obviously dictated by such people as Woll, Hutcheson, Meany and Dubinsky, fairly stunk of Deweyism. Yet there was not one progressive leader to rise to his feet to speak out against it—not Tobin, not Harrison, not Brown, not anybody. The whole mess was allowed to be adopted under a cloak of unanimity.

## RANK AND FILE IGNORE

Take, for one example, the refusal of the Council to send delegates to the coming London world conference of Labor, an action which isolates the AFL from the progressive current of the international trade whole prospect to a sound world

union movement and injures the peace. Undoubtedly if the rank and file were consulted upon this question (which, of course they will not be) an overwhelming majority would favor sending delegates. But Woll, Hutcheson, Dubinsky and company railroaded their rejection through the convention and there was not a single outstanding leader with spunk enough to rise up and voice his opposition.

It is a matter of common knowledge, however, that the corridors of the convention buzzed with opposition to this stupid policy, as well as to various others. If Tobin or some other outstanding progressive had taken the floor to advocate the sending of delegates, undoubtedly Woll and the other reactionaries, who are now dictating AFL Executive Council policy, would have been amazed at the opposition they would have faced. But, because of the weak-kneed attitude of the progressives, the reactionaries got away with this and similar policies, and arose yet, under cover of a pseudo-unanimous vote of the convention.

Now we have the scandal of William Green rejecting the vital proposal of Philip Murray for close cooperation between the CIO and the AFL in support of the important progressive legislative program that will have to be put through the coming session of Congress against a powerful opposition. Of course the great bulk of the AFL members favor such joint action, but this fact does not disturb Mr. Green, who arbitrarily brushes aside Mr. Murray's proposal, even with a sneer.

## DANGEROUS SITUATION

How long is this contradiction going to last, with the mass of the rank and file and lower officialdom taking more and more a progressive line and with the Executive Council following policies that play into the hands of the anti-Roosevelt reactionaries? It is a situation full of danger to the labor movement and to the country in general.

If the United Nations are to face up successfully to the gigantic problems that are confronting them in the war and in the eventual peace, the American government will need to give a strong and progressive lead. This will require that it have the solid backing of the labor movement.

The workers cannot tolerate a situation, therefore, where while the CIO, both top and bottom, is actively supporting progressive policies for our Government, the AFL Executive Council is pursuing a line of opposing and sabotaging many of these policies. There must be an end put to this situation. And it can be ended in a hurry if the progressives in the AFL, including those in high places, speak up on such vital questions as industrial trade union unity and legislative cooperation with the CIO. They should conduct a real fight to make decisions of the Executive Council representative of the great wave of progressivism that is now surging throughout the AFL.