

Victimizing League Militants

By Ben Gitlow

THE reactionary machine, controlled by the New York *Forward*, is warring against the militants. They have branded the Trade Union Educational League a "dual organization," and are expelling union members for belonging to it. They are following the lead of Sam Gompers and John L. Lewis. They fear the progress the League has made and, feeling their grip slipping, they hope to reentrench themselves by the use of terrorism.

In the Jewish unions the bulk of the membership belong to the needle trades. They have always been known for their radicalism. Hence, the leaders dare not use the same anti-red arguments against the lefts that Lewis does in the Miners' Union. If they did they would be howled down by the rank and file. The anti-red propaganda is carried on by the *Forward*, which daily prints the most brazen lies about the lefts. The reactionary leaders, therefore, resort to terrorism and technicalities. The lefts are not frankly attacked because they advocate a revolutionary program. They are evasively charged with "holding caucuses" and belonging to the T. U. E. L., which reactionaries claim is a dual organization. Or upon flimsy pretexts the lefts are charged with violating union rules.

In the Furriers' Union the rank and file are prohibited from expressing opinions in opposition to the right wing machine. When they nominated candidates for the Joint Board these were stricken off the ballot because they were members of the T. U. E. L. and had participated in a protest meeting against the methods of their reactionary officials.

In the Fancy Leather Goods Workers' Union, the most popular candidates of the rank and file had trumped-up charges placed against them and their names stricken off the ballot.

In the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, one of the largest and most important in the needle trades, the war against the lefts is being carried on by Sigman, its president. In Philadelphia, he demanded the resignation of the cloakmakers' Joint Board because they were lefts, but without success. He next attacked Local 22, dressmakers, of New York, one of the largest in the International, and now has fake charges preferred against nearly all its left-wing officials. This effort is not succeeding well either. Meanwhile Sigman tried to deal the League a blow in Chicago. Several of the most active members of the League, and long-time members

of the Union, were expelled because they admitted membership in the T. U. E. L. Sigman threatens that no League member shall hold a responsible position in the I. L. G. W. U.

In the Amalgamated Clothing Workers attempts are being made to liquidate the activities of the League. Spurred on by the *Forward*, the right-wing elements in that organization have lined up their forces for the express purpose of fighting the League. The G. E. B. recently made a request upon the League in the Amalgamated, in New York, to cease its activities, explaining that there was no room in the Amalgamated for organized contending factions. The League members realize that in a great many respects the Amalgamated is far ahead, in progressiveness, of all other unions. But the League members in the Amalgamated realize that the League represents the militant forces of the rank and file in the whole labor movement, and that its program and principles are not confined to any particular union, but apply to all unions. In all unions, no matter how progressive, the militant and progressive elements must be organized to carry out their program. One example will prove how necessary the League organization is in the Amalgamated. In spite of the fact that the last Convention of the Amalgamated went on record for amalgamation, the right wing has kept up for months a most bitter opposition to amalgamation of Locals 2 and 5, which by an overwhelming membership vote went on record for that measure. Had the militants not been organized in the League, the sabotage of the rights would have been completely successful, the left-wing members of the executives driven from their positions, and the rank and file movement in those two locals destroyed. Needless to say that in the Amalgamated the left wing fights for the welfare of the organization and the right wing fights for the well-paying jobs.

The right-wing machine in the needle trades today is fighting desperately to maintain its control of the unions. Under their leadership the unions, which once had an iron grip on the bosses, no longer control the situation. The sweat-shop system is now in full bloom, and scab shops do business unmolested. Scabs work while thousands of union men and women tramp the streets idle. Great numbers of workers have already quit the organization and many thousands more have been suspended for inability to pay dues. Even in the organized shops the conditions are bad. The industry is thoroughly de-

moralized. The right-wing machine in control are in a dilemma; they do not know what to do. In all the unions of the needle trades, once known for their aggressiveness, militancy has disappeared. Instead of general strikes, they now declare stoppages that are a farce. The demoralization is the logical result of right-wing leadership. The League meets this situation with a program of action. The reactionary leaders cannot face this program. To attack the League's program would be suicidal for the reactionary machine, because they have no program themselves. They are interested only in keeping their grip on the union. To allow the Leagues to function would mean that the rank and file will accept their program, and sweep into office a new

leadership that will carry this program into effect.

The left wing accepts the challenge of the right. The Trade Union Educational League in the needle trades will not permit itself to be exterminated. The reactionaries preparing for the next convention will discover that it is one thing to threaten to deprive League members of all privileges of union membership except paying dues, and another thing to carry it out. The League's fight is not separate and apart from the rank and file, who will, in no uncertain tone, give their answer to the reactionaries who want still further to demoralize the unions by splitting the ranks through the expulsion of the most active militant members.