

The Left-Led Unions and Labor Unity, II

By John Swift

If the present independent progressive and Left-led unions are to play an important and special role in the struggle for labor unity, two things are necessary:

1. They must survive all current attempts to destroy them.

2. They must operate on more than "their own union" perspective. Their outlook must encompass the labor movement as a whole and their particular relationship to it.

Each of these two conditions is dependent on the other. A broader perspective is impossible without survival. Survival is impossible without a broader perspective. Given *both* conditions, however, the independent progressive unions can play an increasingly important and advanced role in the struggle for the unity of action of the nation's labor movement.

Let us briefly examine these two inter-dependent propositions. First, the question of survival. This is not only necessary because these unions represent important and advanced sections of the labor movement. It is necessary also in order to influence the outcome of the struggle for unity

within the Right-led unions. The existence of relatively strong bases of Left influence and leadership in a number of industries can become a factor of great importance in teaching workers in Right-led unions the need for unity with the Left, particularly in the same and allied industries.

As a practical example take the farm equipment industry. The workers are split into two major unions and a number of smaller ones. This is an extremely negative factor and has already cost these workers dearly. But when the Red-baiting, splitting leadership of the United Auto Workers took advantage of the lost Harvester strikes of a few months ago in order to raid the plants of the independent progressive United Electrical-Farm Equipment Union, it was in the interests of unity to defeat the raiders. This is exactly what the Harvester workers did.

If one were to see merely the outer shell of unity while remaining indifferent to its inner substance, one might conclude that the UE-FE victory over UAW was bad, for it perpetuated the organizational division of the Harvester workers. If one

understands, however, that *real* labor unity can never be achieved by a policy aimed at the extermination of the Left current, then the conclusion would be quite different. This would be especially true, if the UE-FE victory were seen not as a means to freeze the present situation, but precisely to unfreeze it. This victory helped bring home to all Harvester and farm implement workers that raiding and counter raiding must cease, that *all* the unions in the company chain and industry must begin to pull together. Then something really positive could emerge from the present negative situation. The workers in this industry could then begin to find their way forward, first to united action and then to organic unity.

From this it follows that there can be no basis for real labor unity, that is, for unity cutting across ideological and political differences, without defeating the present Right-wing attempt to exterminate the Left-wing and specifically the policy of raiding. So long as the Right-wing splitters look upon the independent progressive-led unions as prey to be devoured, so long will a policy of raiding prevail as against a policy of unity. This is true even where the rank and file of a given Right-led union are opposed to raiding. The latent opposition may never become articulate so long as the official policy of raiding appears to be "successful."

Raiding, if it is to cease completely, therefore must first cease to "pay",

even in the narrow, distorted Right-wing sense. There is evidence that it is ceasing to "pay." The UE-FE record of beating back raiding is matched by that of the splendid record of the Mine Mill Union, while the Fur and Leather Union and the West Coast Longshoremens have maintained their strength intact. The uproar which took place at the last IUE convention over the huge sums squandered on raiding and the action of the General Electric workers at Lynn in calling for unity with the UE indicate that raiding is losing its support even in the IUE, the union whose very origin is due to splitting and raiding.

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We are now entering into a period of sharper class battles. This will confront the independent progressive-led unions with both the opportunity and necessity to pursue a more vigorous, militant and affirmative struggle for labor unity. Their own future and role will be determined by the extent and effectiveness of this struggle.

It is not enough that these unions have a perspective of "holding their own" or even of strengthening themselves, as important as that is. It is necessary that they operate with a longer range perspective in mind. This cannot be based on permanent separation from the rest of the labor movement. These unions did not leave the C.I.O. as a matter of choice. They have always been for a united

labor movement. They became independent because they were expelled by the Right-wing. A virtue should not be made now out of this necessity. Sometimes this is mistakenly done. The desire of these unions should be to return to the main body of organized labor, not as lambs devoured by the rapacious wolves of labor disunity, but as part of a process of uniting all wings and sections of the labor movement around the immediate interests of labor and the nation.

Toward this goal of real labor unity, militant trade unionists in all unions and the independent progressive-led unions must work consciously and patiently. Every member of these unions should be won for this objective and taught how to work for it. In order, however, to make tangible headway in this direction it is necessary to combat two wrong tendencies in the Left-led unions. The first wrong tendency expresses itself in a lack of confidence in the ability of the independent progressive unions to survive the concerted blows of the Right-wing raiders, the corporations and the government. This is by no means a prevalent opinion, but it does exist in a few places. In essence it advocates the complete surrender of the positions and policies of the Left. It sees this as "the only way out," and as the means by which the independent Left-led unions can "merge" once again with the mainstream of the labor movement.

When the exponents of this position use the word "merge" they do not mean "unite," "join together," "coalesce." What they really mean is "dissolve." To merge two different qualities, whether chemical or political, is to create a new quality, in this instance, a new and different situation in the labor movement. This was what happened when Right-Left unity helped form the C.I.O. in 1935. But a self-imposed dissolution of Left bases, no matter how it is dressed up in "unity" garb, is still dissolution. It therefore could not bring about a new and more favorable situation in the labor movement. If anything, it could only worsen and prolong the present divisive state of affairs.

Let us take a concrete situation. The division in the ranks of the farm equipment workers must find its complete resolution someday in the unification of these workers within one union. This could take many different forms. But, is organic unity a practical consideration at this time? How can it be, when the UAW leadership continues to conduct a war of extermination against the Left?

A single united union certainly will come for these workers, but only *after* the policy of raiding, splitting and hysterical Red-baiting has come to an end. It will come only after the Left wins the *democratic right* to exist within the labor movement and to advocate its own advanced policies. Any other concept of Right-Left organic unity represents capitulation.

lation and the betrayal of working-class principle.

To raise the question of organic unity prematurely and carelessly is to *detract* from the more *immediate* and *practical* steps toward unity. These point in the direction of achieving *unity of action* as the most important and most solid foot-hold from which to move forward to more advanced forms of unity. The tendency to jump stages, to see organic unity as the starting point instead of the end result of a whole period and process of struggle, is to defeat the very objective of labor unity. This is particularly true where Left-led unions are involved. But it is also true more generally.

The struggle for C.I.O.-A. F. of L. organic unity would be much further advanced, for example, if more concrete steps were taken to pave the way to it by *united action today*. It is just such united action that the labor reformists fear. They are afraid of the *movement of workers* for unity, wanting unity to be only a product of their own slick maneuvers on top. But without the active participation of the workers on a shop, local union and industry-wide basis, real labor unity cannot be attained.

Unless the tendency to put the cart of organic unity before the horse of united front action is defeated, it will be impossible to cope with the other equally false and even more prevalent tendency in the independent progressive unions. This tendency takes the opposite tack. It

views the situation in the labor movement as fixed and frozen. It sees the large Right-led unions and the smaller Left-led ones and believes that "never the twain shall meet". It sees no sense in talking about unity or in fighting for unity. It looks upon all this as a utopian dream. It believes that the job of each of the independent progressive unions is to "hoe its own row" and to keep clear of "entanglements,"—meaning by this, all close ties with other sections of the labor movement including the other Left-led unions. Thus, it believes in "going it alone" with a vengeance and letting "life decide the future."

This perspectiveless perspective, this strange trade-union version of "rugged individualism," is defended from the lofty perch of so-called "principle" as well as from the terra firma of so-called "practicality." But as we shall show, this position is neither practical nor principled.

The Leftist rejection of the struggle for labor unity conceals a basically opportunist estimate of things, particularly of the situation in the present Right-led unions. It sees these unions as all the same with no gradations and differences between them. It sees only the Right-wing leadership of these unions and not the rank and file. Or, it sees them as one and the same. Hence it betrays a lack of confidence in the workers. It lacks confidence in the ability of the progressives to win these workers from below for a policy of unity. It lacks

confidence in the ability of the workers to impose their will for unity upon their leadership, or to change this leadership where it refuses to bow to this will.

Essentially, the Right-opportunist position of capitulation and the "Left"-sectarian position of "go it alone," have the same common source. Both exaggerate the strength of the Right-wing officialdom because they exaggerate the strength of American imperialism. Both underestimate the developing new situation in the country and the world and the growing new possibilities for winning the workers in the Right-led unions for progressive policies and real labor unity.

The Right-opportunist position of capitulation feeds the Leftist "go it alone" position. So also the other way around. The negative approach to labor unity results in a failure to speak to the rank and file of the Right-led unions. Or where such appeals are made, to have them issued in a purely perfunctory, bureaucratic and formal fashion, without feeling or conviction. It also affects the progressive-led unions themselves. It undermines their inner unity and morale. For two reasons: First, it places in jeopardy the policy of unity across ideological lines which has been carefully fostered in these unions—sometimes even to the extreme of having Left-wing militants cease fighting more vigorously for one or another progressive measure. Second, it leads some workers to the false conclusion

that it is the Left-wing which stands as an obstacle to unity.

Those independent progressive unions which made clear from the outset their position on labor unity, beat off the raiding attacks more successfully than those that did not. When the UE delegates "jumped the gun" and left the C.I.O. convention in 1948 *before* the act of their expulsion, even though the expulsion was a foregone conclusion, they made it easier for the Red-baiters to split their union. They raised a doubt in the minds of some workers as to who was responsible for the split. Thus, even from the narrower viewpoint of so-called practicality and expediency the fight for unity represents the very best policy.

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This is most important to remember in the period ahead. The need for unity on the part of the independent progressive-led unions is going to arise in most urgent form. Any failure on the part of these unions to audaciously and skillfully lead the struggle for unity can have only the most dire consequence for their own survival and for the labor movement as a whole. The workers in the independent progressive unions need unity in just as vital a way as do those in the Right-led unions. Only those unions who *take the lead* in fighting for unity in every way, honestly and sincerely, and not as some "maneuver" will win the lasting respect and allegiance of the

workers. For the division in the ranks of the workers has cost them much. We are not now speaking of the big question, of the qualitatively new political role which labor could play in the nation, given a united movement. Here we are discussing the more limited question of putting up a common economic fight against the new arrogance of the corporations.

In a period of industrial boom, when the increased demand for labor power operates in the labor market to the temporary advantage of the worker, labor unity does not appear to have such supreme urgency in the eyes of the workers. In such a period the bosses are compelled to make more concessions. During the recent boom the government intervened and imposed wage controls as a means of artificially counteracting the economic factors favoring higher wages. If these controls have since been removed in the holy name of "free enterprise," the real reason is that the monopoly enterprises see the boom as swiftly coming to an end and want to restore to themselves a free hand with which to tear down past labor gains.

Already in a number of industries over-production has become a problem. This is not yet a general phenomenon. But in a number of consumer industries, in industries closely tied in with agriculture and in a number of non-ferrous metal extraction industries, this is becoming an increasing problem.

An example of what is in store for labor as the economic situation worsens can be seen by a study of the International Harvester strikes of last year. The IHC always has been one of the toughest, most vicious anti-labor corporations in the country. Whatever the Harvester workers have won in union rights and improved conditions over the years were wrested from the company in bitter battles.

A year ago this giant corporation saw its chance to strike a blow against its workers. The reason 1952 was chosen is simple. The first six months of 1952 had shown a five percent drop in the sale of farm implements as compared with the previous year. As the publication *Implement and Tractor* noted this January, "The experience of the industry during 1952 indicates the complete return of the industry to a buyer's market . . . without a single exception for any type of farm equipment." Thus, the growing symptoms of crisis in agriculture and the loss of former export markets, plus the division in the ranks of the workers, gave the Harvester Corporation its "opportunity" to take on the unions one at a time and to defeat them separately.

This is exactly what happened. Over the issue of the right to downgrade day work and retime piece-work jobs, the corporation first took on and defeated the A. F. of L. local in its Milwaukee plant, in a bitter nine week strike. Then it forced a strike on the UAW local in the Mel-

rose Park, Illinois, plant. In the midst of this strike, the independent UE-FE locals, confronted with the same intransigence of the company, also "hit the bricks." Despite the attempts of the UE-FE leadership to work out a united front with the UAW during the strike, the UAW leadership broke the common front and forced the UE-FE locals to carry on the battle alone. After twelve weeks of terror, a murder frameup and starvation, the UE-FE was compelled to bow to company-dictated terms.

Thus labor disunity had "paid off" for the company in a big way, and the workers in the Right-led A. F. of L. and UAW-C.I.O. locals and those in the independent progressive UE-FE locals are doing the paying. But when the UAW splitters sought to take advantage of the defeats to raid the UE-FE, the workers rallied behind their independent union in a remarkable display of militant solidarity. They did so because they recognized that of all unions in the industry, the UE-FE had fought the hardest to preserve their gains and had tried to achieve a degree of unity during the strike. They did not blame their own union leadership for the disunity in the industry and for the defeat.

It cannot be said, however, that the UE-FE leaders saw early enough the *crucial* significance of unity. Otherwise they would have fought more vigorously and persistently for unity over a longer period of time.

They would have gone all-out in support of the Milwaukee strike. The fact is that even the progressive militant leaders of the UE-FE miscalculated in their estimate of the relationship of forces. They failed to realize that what was enough to bring victory during the war and immediate postwar boom years no longer sufficed in 1952. Unity of action plus *a new level of rank and file mass mobilization* in struggle had become burning imperatives. We shall have something further to say later about this latter necessity.

Referring to the lessons of the Harvester strike in the February issue of *March of Labor*, a leader of the UE-FE points out that "a genuine approach to unity with the UAW-C.I.O. and the A. F. of L. *long before the crisis of a strike* could have made victory possible." (Emphasis as in the original—J. S.)

The lost strikes do not represent the end of company attacks. The beast has tasted blood. It has already arrogantly informed the unions that they can expect no modifications or concessions in the escalator provisions, not even the modest ones won by the General Motors and Ford workers. Whether the company can get away with this remains to be seen. Despite the fact that the UE-FE has come back strong from its defeat, the corporation will continue to exploit the division in the ranks of the workers.

This means that unity on a chain-wide basis is now the key question.

This has been called for by the U.E.-F.E. The same is true for workers in other company chains, such as General Electric. Here, too, the UE has taken the lead in calling for unity. The time has come for workers who are employed by the same corporation, but separated by different union affiliations, to get together in joint councils for joint consultation and action. Such a development is of critical importance and *does not require any union giving up its own individual identity, affiliation or freedom of action.* In fact, the *only* way such unity can be achieved is to make it strictly clear that organic unity *is not contemplated or proposed at this time* because the conditions for it are not yet ripe. What is being proposed as a *first* step forward toward ultimate unification is chain-wide united action of the existing unions as *presently constituted.*

That such joint action can be realized between the independent progressive unions and Right-wing led unions, is to be seen in a number of recent developments. We have already referred to the action of the I.U.E. General Electric local at Lynn. During the Harvester strike a number of U.A.W. Harvester locals voted to invite representatives of the U.E.-F.E. strikers to appear before their Harvester Council. The Milwaukee A. F. of L. local raised funds and in other ways identified itself with the U.E.-F.E. strike. In New York, Local 1227 of U.E. and Local 8 of the A. F. of L. Metal Polishers set

up a joint committee to negotiate contracts with two companies.

In 1951, the independent Mine Mill Union united the copper workers, including Right-led A. F. of L. locals, and scored a great and common strike victory. The Mine Mill Union has also been working to unite the brass workers. A first step in this direction was the convening of an inter-union conference of five locals in five American Brass Company plants. In a recently adopted Policy statement, the International Executive Board of the Mine Mill Union had this to say about the prospect of labor unity.

We in Mine Mill applaud any and all moves toward labor unity. As far as we ourselves are concerned, we believe the first need is for unity among the workers in our industry. We call attention to the steps already taken toward unity among the workers in the Connecticut brass industry, as well as the steps toward unity on the legislative front in Montana and Utah. The unions in the oil and packinghouse industries, and to some extent in the brass industry, last year pioneered the way in finding unified approaches to bargaining. This kind of unity means that all, or most of the workers in an industry present a united front to the employers. To the extent that the workers remain united around such a program, they are unbeatable.

We believe new steps can be taken in our own industry this year aimed at broadening the unity among the non-ferrous metal workers to win their bargaining goals. We intend to make it

known throughout this industry that we invite and welcome such bargaining unity with any and all metal workers, regardless of affiliation.

The issue of chain-wide and industry-wide unity in bargaining is bound to become more and more important. In every industry where the progressive and Left-led unions exist, they can do much to begin the process of fighting for unity. In many instances the problem is one which starts right in a single plant, where tool room, maintenance, or office workers are frequently to be found in rival unions. Yet little is done to bring about solidarity between these workers of different unions. Thus, it is not uncommon to see workers of one union out on strike, while other union men and women belonging to other unions continue on the job. Nor is it always their fault. Frequently nothing is done in advance of the strike to establish the principle of mutual aid and mutual respect between these workers and their organizations.

Only by utilizing every opportunity for bridging the gap between unions can the independent progressive-led unions help to change the atmosphere in the labor movement. In some industries they can play a key role, for there can be no effective all-out action without them. This is true of the West Coast maritime industry. It is true of the non-ferrous metal industry and of the fur and leather industries. It is true

of the farm equipment and electrical industries.

The independent progressive unions have begun to project the slogan of labor unity and to fight for it. But they have only begun. This struggle has not yet permeated all the thinking and work of these unions. It is not yet seen as the *major* task, requiring that type of conviction, determination and energy for which the Left-wing and progressives are so renowned.

Not every opportunity for solidarity and unity is seized. Too few steps are taken by the independent progressive unions to *prove* their solidarity with the workers in the Right-led unions when these are engaged in battle with the companies. There still are tendencies to view such struggles as "phony." What seems to be forgotten is the simple truth that the struggle of the workers with the bosses is never "phony," even where the leadership may be. The I.U.E., for example, has split and raided all across the country. But when its workers go out on strike, as was recently the case in Syracuse, New York, they are workers engaged in a class battle and must be given every support. When the Left-wing in the labor movement learns to fight consistently for this kind of trade-union solidarity, it will do more in practice to teach the workers the basic difference between honest trade-union fighters and reactionary corrupt leaders than any amount of talk.

Especially toward unions that were raiding them, the progressive and Left leaders frequently have found it difficult to maintain an objective point of view. This certainly has been and continues to be difficult. But a policy based on subjective resentment will only make it easier for the reactionary labor leaders to keep labor divided. Name calling, re-raiding, and other forms of "answering in kind," only give some workers the feeling that they are being used as pawns in an unprincipled factional fight for power by *both sides*. Among the workers in the Right-led unions it frequently results in a subjective reaction, a feeling that "their union" is under attack and that they must rise blindly to its defense.

Many opportunities exist for united labor action and many more must be created by the continuous efforts of the progressive forces. Some of these are: The fight for an anti-depression program based upon raising the purchasing power of the workers and the mass of the people. The fight to organize the unorganized, particularly in the South. The fight against McCarthyism. The fight to defeat and repeal all anti-labor and all reactionary legislation and to adopt progressive social legislation. The beginning of coordinated independent political action on the part of all labor unions and their progressive allies, particularly in the approaching municipal

and congressional election campaigns.

All these fields offer opportunities for parallel and joint labor action. Nor should progressive labor leaders wait for engraved invitations to participate in these movements. The class struggle is not some ritzy social affair, not some diplomatic ball, where everyone stands on ceremony and where all the formal amenities are lived up to. The reactionary labor bureaucrats do not want the presence or the participation of the independent progressive unions or of the Left generally. They do not want labor unity. But progressives should not make it easier for these anti-unity elements. It is their duty to show the workers who it is that is splitting and dividing labor's ranks and who it is that is striving to unite them. If the independent Left-led unions are determined to make their modest contribution to unity, it will become increasingly difficult for the Right-wing labor leaders to prevent this. They will only run into more frequent collision with their own rank and file.

The previously quoted policy declaration of the Mine Mill Union correctly states:

We know that the full flower of unity among the people and within the labor movement will not be won without a fight for it. But we in Mine Mill believe such unity can and must be achieved. We intend to fight for it; we intend to be a part of it.

This is the approach and the spirit needed to win.

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We have already made clear that the unity of the trade-union movement does not require ideological unity. What it does require is a recognition of the right of conflicting ideological and political tendencies to exist and to be fought out in one and the same labor movement.

This is essentially what Joseph Stalin told an American trade-union delegation in 1927, when it asked him how labor unity could be attained. He replied: "I think there is only one way out; leave room for conflict of opinion and of tendencies within the American trade unions, and give the working class of America an opportunity of making a free choice of these tendencies. . . ."

Stalin did not advocate the giving up of conflicting opinions. He knew that this was impossible and, were it possible, wrong and harmful. For, said Stalin to this delegation composed in large part of Right-wing labor leaders, "if the labor movement in America desires to live on and develop, it cannot avoid a conflict of opinion and tendencies within the trade unions." And elsewhere: "The working class of America stands in absolute need of such conflict of opinion and of such criticism in order that it may be able to choose between the various tendencies and finally to take its stand as an independent or-

ganized force within American society." (Stalin, *Leninism*, Vol. I, pp. 383-4.)

From this it follows that the pursuance of broader policies and the searching out of all possible avenues towards labor solidarity and unity does not require that the Left current give up its identity or soft pedal its criticisms of reactionary policies. To pursue broader policies, to influence the course of events in the whole labor movement, the Left must be more, and not less, of a Left current. That is, it must base itself more squarely on class-struggle policies. It must help propel labor ever forward, politically and ideologically.

This means that if the progressive and Left-led unions are to play a greater role in advancing labor unity and the interests of the nation, the Left current within these unions must also be strengthened, by being both widened and deepened.

Sometimes when the Left-wing loses ground to the Right-wing, it is said that the Left "was too far ahead of the masses." Where true, the question still arises: Could it have been prevented and without giving up the advanced ideology of the Left? The answer is: Yes! Many workers who were first organized by the Left-led trade unions were later lost to the Right-led unions because these workers were not given even an elementary education in the difference between progressive and reactionary trade union policies. Is it not also true, that as some of the

Left-led unions grew in size, organizing new, previously inexperienced sections of workers who knew nothing of the history of the union and of the Left-wing in the labor movement, that the political and ideological problems within the union also grew?

It is further true that frequently Communists and Left-wingers have taken a narrow, oversimplified "bread and butter" approach to political and ideological questions. They have thought that all that was required to win the minds of the workers was to put forward correct immediate economic demands and to fight for these. But the failure to struggle *consciously* for the minds of the workers has not meant that these minds remained blank. It only meant that the reactionary ideology of the ruling class and of its "me-too" labor lieutenants was permitted to poison the minds of the workers.

Sometimes the very economic gains won by Left leadership, as when a group's economic status was greatly raised, led not to greater class consciousness and militancy, but to greater illusions in capitalism, to a loss of militancy and to petty bourgeois thinking. Only where economic gains were used to teach the workers to rely on their own militant and united strength, only where the workers were taught how temporary and illusory was their "security" under capitalism, only where they were strengthened constantly in a basic class outlook while fighting to ex-

tend their gains, were these workers maintained as a militant, clear-sighted and advanced force.

There is much which still needs to be done to make the progressive and Left-led unions better fighters for the workers, and progressive unions in every sense of the word. This is not to deny the many fine qualities of which these unions can justly be proud. They alone in the labor movement refused to surrender to the war hysteria and war drive. No small matter. They are by far the most democratic unions in the country, the most militant, and the most advanced on the question of Negro-white unity.

But having said this, it is also necessary to point out that the Left-led unions have not been completely immune from the weaknesses that apply to the American labor movement generally. American unions are notorious for their bureaucratic methods. Aping the bourgeoisie, the reactionary labor officialdom considers the trade union movement not as a *movement of workers*, but as a new and lucrative kind of "business" over which they are big shot "Executives." Everything is done from the top. Large full time staffs, all controlled by one central authority, "service" the union and run its affairs. Attendance at meetings is not considered important, for the pay-roll check-off *guarantees* full dues payments.

To some extent this approach also finds its reflection in progressive-led

unions, even though as we have previously pointed out, they are the most democratic and rank and file run in the country.

That all unions will have to bring about a much fuller participation of their membership than heretofore, is as certain as the fact that their survival will depend upon this. This is a lesson also to be learned from the Harvester strike. It is true that the main cause for the defeat of the U.E.-F.E. was the lack of unity among the workers in the chain. But it is also true, and this is acknowledged by an F.E. leader in the article in *March of Labor* previously quoted, that the rank and file was neither prepared fully enough, nor organized well enough to withstand an ordeal of this kind. Too much was done exclusively *from the top*. The mass of the workers were not drawn in fully and actively enough in the struggle. They were not taken sufficiently into the confidence of the leadership. The result: ranks began to break, demoralization set in, the strike was lost.

Learning this lesson, the U.E.-F.E. did mobilize the ranks of this union in a new way after the strike defeat. The result: the workers closed ranks, a new fighting spirit developed, the struggle was continued inside the plants, and what was at one point a highly dangerous situation was soon altered.

The Left-led unions also face the problem of fighting in a new way for the rights of the Negro people. The

pioneering role played by Communists on this question more than two decades ago has brought important gains. Today, the overwhelming bulk of organized labor has been compelled to do something on the issue of Negro rights.

This means that the Left-led unions have a broad basis for unity with the rest of the labor movement on various aspects of this issue, particularly on F.E.P.C. It also means that the Left-led unions cannot rest on laurels won yesterday, but must set *new goals* in the struggle for the *complete equality* of Negro workers on the job and in union leadership, and for the *complete freedom* of the Negro people. Of special importance at this time is the struggle for federal and state F.E.P.C.s, for the inclusion of F.E.P.C. clauses in all contracts, for the right to vote in the South, and for the organization of the Negro and white workers in the South.

The progressive unions also have a special task in projecting the struggle for peace as a major issue in the entire labor movement. At a time when some sections of the Right-led unions are beginning to raise this question, even though timidly and confused as yet, it is the duty of the independent progressive unions to bring increasing clarity and activity to this struggle. This has not been the case to date. They still are on the defensive on this issue even though recent developments have more than confirmed the correctness of their opposition to the

Korean war and to the whole war drive.

The Left-led unions also have a special duty to keep aloft the banner of international and hemispheric labor solidarity and to express its spirit in every way possible. At a time when the A. F. of L. and C.I.O. leadership is actively engaged in splitting activity abroad, it is incumbent upon the Left-wing labor leaders to uphold the honor of the American labor movement.

The independent progressive unions should also imbue their ranks with a clear cut political perspective for the labor movement. This should be the objective of establishing labor as a *thoroughly independent political force*, with a political machinery of its own, with a progressive program of its own for the nation, and with its own ties and alliances with other democratic

forces. Such a development would be the most decisive prerequisite for the formation of a new majority coalition of all progressive Americans. It would constitute the new conditions for a popular progressive coalition in which labor would no longer be the tail-end to the bourgeois political parties, but an independent political force, which even if not at first at the head of a party of its own, yet definitely moving in that direction.

If the independent progressive unions can be strengthened along these lines, they will stand out as progressive examples to the rest of the labor movement and can influence it to progressive policies and class unity. It is the task of Communists and all conscious Left-minded workers who are members of these unions to help bring this about.

ANNOUNCEMENT

The September issue of *Political Affairs* will include a special supplement containing a detailed reader's guide to William Z. Foster's *History of the Communist Party of the United States*.—the Editor.