

INVESTIGATION SHOWS MANY TRADE UNIONS ARE STILL DISCRIMINATING AGAINST APPRENTICES IN INDUSTRY

By MAX SHACHTMAN.

The partial results of an investigation being conducted by the Young Workers' League of America into the conditions of the young workers and apprentices in the American trades unions has shown that many trade unions of the country still discriminate against the young workers in their ranks, especially those unions which have separate apprenticeship regulations.

With the Printer's Devils.

In the International Typographical Union, apprentices are not admitted to full membership under the age of 21. At 16, an apprentice may be admitted, going thru a 5-year apprenticeship before being admitted as a regular journeyman, his 5-year period being divided into five yearly grades and classes. Although an apprentice pays no dues, at the same time he has no vote in the organization.

Practically the same procedure is maintained in other printing trades unions, with such variations as the Amalgamated Lithographers of America, in which the apprenticeship period stretches over a period of four years. Most of the unions insist upon a strict physical, and in some cases an educational examination of the applicant to apprenticeship. All of them restrict the number of apprentices in proportion to the number of regular

members on the job, fearing the loss of control in the industry.

Wages are settled for apprentices at the same time that the regular scale is negotiated with the bosses, and a few of the unions have certain minimum standards for the young workers in their ranks.

Metal-Machinery Industry the Same.

The situation of the apprentices in the metal machinery industry is much the same as that in the printing trades. In the Metal Polishers International Union, apprentices must serve three years before becoming journeymen. Mr. Charles R. Atherton, general secretary, in explaining why apprentices pay the same dues and initiation fee but do not have the right to vote on questions of wages or strikes, writes that the apprentice should not object to that, or even to the fact that he does not get the same wages "for it is the journeymen who by their hard work and sacrifices of the past have brought the trade up to a higher level with a higher rate of wages for the apprentices to step into when he finally finishes his apprenticeship." The Pattern Makers League of North America entitles its apprentices to a voice in the meetings but not a vote. The apprentice, by general rule, is tied down to the job he started with unless a joint committee of the union and the bosses permits him a "change of air."

A typical agreement with an employer is the one made by the United States Railroad Labor Board between the Chicago and Northwestern Railway Co., and the Federated Shop Crafts. Only at the expiration of their apprenticeship are the young workers given the same minimum rate of wages as their older brothers. Here also the number of apprentices is strictly limited. A good feature of the agreement is the stipulation that no apprentice may work on a night shift or do overtime work in the first three years of his apprenticeship.

Machinery Breaking Down Need of Skill.

From the investigation it can be noted that barriers against equality in the unions of this country exist only in those trades where skill is still needed. The invention of skill-eliminating machinery has almost simultaneously done away with apprenticeship barriers in the union of that trade, switching them instead to small "non-trust" shops, where apprentices are the only means of competing with big industry.

That this development is recognized in some unions is seen from a letter written by E. Lewis Evans of the Tobacco Workers' International Union. "Our calling is not what might be called a skilled trade, requiring apprenticeship service. Sufficient skill may be acquired in a short time in most branches of the trade to develop sufficient efficiency to hold down a job. Machinery has played a very large part in removing the necessity for skill."

No apprenticeship is maintained in the International Union of Steam & Operating Engineers, the International Hod Carriers' Building & Com-

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Young Worker Declines to Scab On I. W. W.

(Special to "The Young Worker.")

CRANBROOK, B. C.—An interesting incident in connection with the strike now being conducted by the Industrial Workers of the World in the lumber camps of British Columbia occurred today in this camp.

In response to an advertisement of the British Columbia Spruce Co., a "lumberjack" a little over four feet tall and 14 years old, came to the camp here to work. No sooner, however, did he find out that there was a strike in process than he hopped off the train and going to the hall of the strikers assured them that he was with them and would not scab on the wobblies.

The striking workers are more than holding their own and are enthusiastically fighting for their demands. The knowledge that the company is so hard up for scabs that it has to fool young workers into coming into the camps has made the workers realize the strength of their position and they intend to stick it out until they win.

Two thousand men are needed to replace the strikers and the lumber trust has so far been able to recruit only 150 men, including those that did not come out to strike when the fight began.

Try as we can, there is no excuse to be found for not sending in your sub today!

Unions Still Discriminate Against Youth

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mon Laborers' Union, the Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen, the firemen and oilers, the maintenance of way men, the boot and shoe workers and numerous others, either because machinery has replaced the necessity of skill, as in the shoe workers or, as in the maintenance of way men's union, it is the policy to accept all workers on an absolutely equal basis, with no discrimination whatsoever against the youth.

League's Program on Apprentices.

The Young Workers' League in its program is opposed to any discrimination in industry against the young workers. It is bad enough that the young workers are more viciously exploited by the bosses than are the older ones, without the unions themselves placing added burdens and difficulties in the way of the youth. The development of industry has placed the youth in industry, and in many cases has made them a factor in the competition among the workers in their hunt for jobs. The young workers must be put on a basis of equality in the trade unions at the very least.

The unionists of this country must line up with the Young Workers' League on the following demands in the question of apprentices and the young workers:

Equal wages for equal work for young and old.

A six-hour day and five-day week for the youth.

No night work and overtime for the young workers under 20.

Two years apprenticeship, including the probation period, the apprenticeships to be strictly under the supervision of the unions or shop councils and not under joint councils of bosses and unions. The interests of the boss are not those of the workers.

Shop vocational training for all young workers up to the age of 18 to be controlled by the unions. The young workers are to be paid full union wages while learning.

And, in order to help the young workers join the unions, the entrance fees should be lowered in accord with their ability to pay.

We call on the trade unionists to support us in these legitimate demands. And the young workers must not stand aside and let the older ones do the job. The youth must try all means to enter the unions and fight for the united front of old and young by unionizing every worker irrespective of age.

Discrimination against the youth is an outworn policy and must be swept aside by the march of progress of the workers of this country.