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# A Call to Action

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by William Z. Foster

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Militants! The time has come for action. We must now gird up our loins for a great effort to make a real fighting organization out of the trade union movement. We must now plunge directly into our vital task of amalgamating the many craft unions into a few industrial unions and of inspiring them with genuine proletarian spirit. The Trade Union Educational League has launched its nationwide campaign to organize the militants everywhere to carry on the indispensable work of education and reorganization, a work for which the hard-pressed labor movement now stands in shrieking need. All true trade union rebels are urged to join hands with the league immediately.

The league's task of organizing the militants is a gigantic one — one that will require intelligence, determination, and discipline to accomplish. As things now stand, the militants are scattered broadcast through many thousands of local unions, central labor councils, etc., and there is scarcely the faintest trace of communication or cooperation between them. It is an utter chaos. And the only way this chaos can be conquered and the army of militants developed into a unified body capable of exerting great influence in the labor movement is by the rigid application of modern organization methods. Such methods are the very heart of the league's program. It proposes not to attack

the problem simultaneously in all its phases — which would be a futile project — but to go at it intensively, section by section. It is going to carry out a series of great national drives, month by month, to organize the militants in one industry after another. When the circuit of the industries is completed — which should be in 6 or 8 months — there will exist a well-defined organization of the militants in every trade union and industrial center in the entire country. Then a general national conference will be held to map out a complete educational program, to elect league officials, etc. All told the campaign is one of the most elaborate in labor history, and it must eventually result in making the progressive and radical unionists the determining factor in the labor movement.

The first of these national drives will be directed to establishing local general educational groups of militants of every trade simultaneously in all the important cities and towns everywhere. Once established, these local groups, in addition to their other activities, will perform the vital organization work of carrying out the rapidly following later drives to organize the militants in the respective industries. Their first job (the second national drive) will be to organize the railroad educational organization. It will be done as follows: At a given signal (which will come late in March [1922]) the hundreds of local general groups all over the country will direct their united attention and energy to organizing local educational groups of railroad militants in their respective territories. By this intensive method scores, if not hundreds, of such bodies will come into existence simultaneously in all the principal railroad centers. All these local railroad groups will be put in touch with each other through the general office of the league, and thus the railroad militant organization will take on national scope. It will immediately embark upon a nationwide campaign to amalgamate the 16 railroad craft unions into one industrial organization. This educational propaganda will be carried into every local union in the entire indus-

try by the local railroad groups or rank and file amalgamation committees. For the first time in their history the railroad militants will find themselves in an organizational movement to combine their many obsolete craft unions into one modern industrial union. Month by month similar drives will be put on in the other industries — metal, building, clothing, mining, etc. — until finally the educational organization covers every ramification of the trade union structure and the rejuvenating influence of the organized militants making itself felt throughout the entire labor movement.

With this call to action the first phase of the league's organization — the setting up of the local general groups — is initiated. Besides being issued publicly, the call is also being laid directly before more than 1,000 live wire trade unionists in that many cities and towns, with an urgent appeal that they immediately call together groups of militant unionists and get our campaign of dynamic education started among them. Considering the present desperate plight of the trade union movement, the utter failure of its leaders to adopt the indispensable measures of consolidation and inspiration of the unions, together with the growing understanding of the necessity for organizing the militants in the old unions, it is safe to say most of the 1,000 live wires will respond vigorously to our call. In the first week of March, when the initial meetings of the groups are definitely scheduled to take place everywhere, at least 400 or 500 local branches of the Trade Union Educational League will be formed. Thus the organization will be made a positive factor in the labor movement.

Rebel unionists are urged to form such groups everywhere, whether the league national headquarters has corresponded with them directly or not. Without further ado they should take serious hold of the situation and organize themselves at once. All groups formed without direct contact with the league's office should immediately select a corresponding secretary and have

him write at once for full information on the league and its work. Quick action on their part is necessary if they are to participate in and profit from the league's many rapidly oncoming drives to organize the militants in the various industries.

In organizing the local groups two cardinal principles should always be borne in mind. The first is that all dual union tendencies should be suppressed. The league is flatly opposed to secessionism in the labor movement. Its rock bottom tactical position is that rebels belong among the organized masses and should stay there at all costs. To avoid every semblance of dualism the league does not permit the collecting of regular dues or per capita tax from members or sympathizing unions. It is financed through donations by its members, sale of literature, etc. The other proposition to remember is that under no circumstances should the groups be confined merely to member of this or that political party or tendency. In England, France, and other countries the organizations of trade union militants are made up of several political factions. They consist of all the honest, active, energetic unionists, regardless of their political beliefs, who oppose the timidity and incompetence of the old bureaucracy, and who are willing to adopt the broad radical measures necessary to make the trade unions into real fighting bodies. And so it must be here. To be effective the league groups will have to include all the natural rebel elements among the trade unions, even though they are not all cut according to one political pattern. Such groups as fail to take this into consideration — that is, where they restrict their membership along party lines — will automatically condemn themselves to sectarianism and comparative impotency.

Militants! Again we say the time has come for action. For a long, long while we have declared that the supreme goal of the labor movement is to do away with capitalism and to establish a workers' republic. But our efforts, because of our tendency to separate ourselves from the masses into dual unions, have not

helped appreciably to this end. Through our dualistic methods the organized masses have been left to stagnate and to flounder about leaderless and at the mercy of a conservative officialdom totally incapable of leading them to emancipation. We must now end this condition; we must assume our proper function as the dynamic, onward-driving element in the trade unions. This we can do efficiently only if we are thoroughly organized throughout the length and breadth of the labor movement — even as the militants in all other countries have long since learned. The Trade Union Educational League herewith presents a practical program for bringing about this essential organization. This program represents the most important development in the American labor movement for many years. It constitutes the only means by which the workers of this country can be roused from their mental slumber and lined up definitely and clearly against the capitalists and their abominable profit system. If you are a wide-awake militant; if you really understand modern militant tactics and are not blinded by the impossible theories that have ruined the American labor movement, you will join hands with the league at once, not next week, or next month, but now, immediately!

Get busy! Organize!

**The Trade Union Educational League,**  
*William Z. Foster, Secretary-Treasurer,*  
Chicago, Ill.

*Edited by Tim Davenport*

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