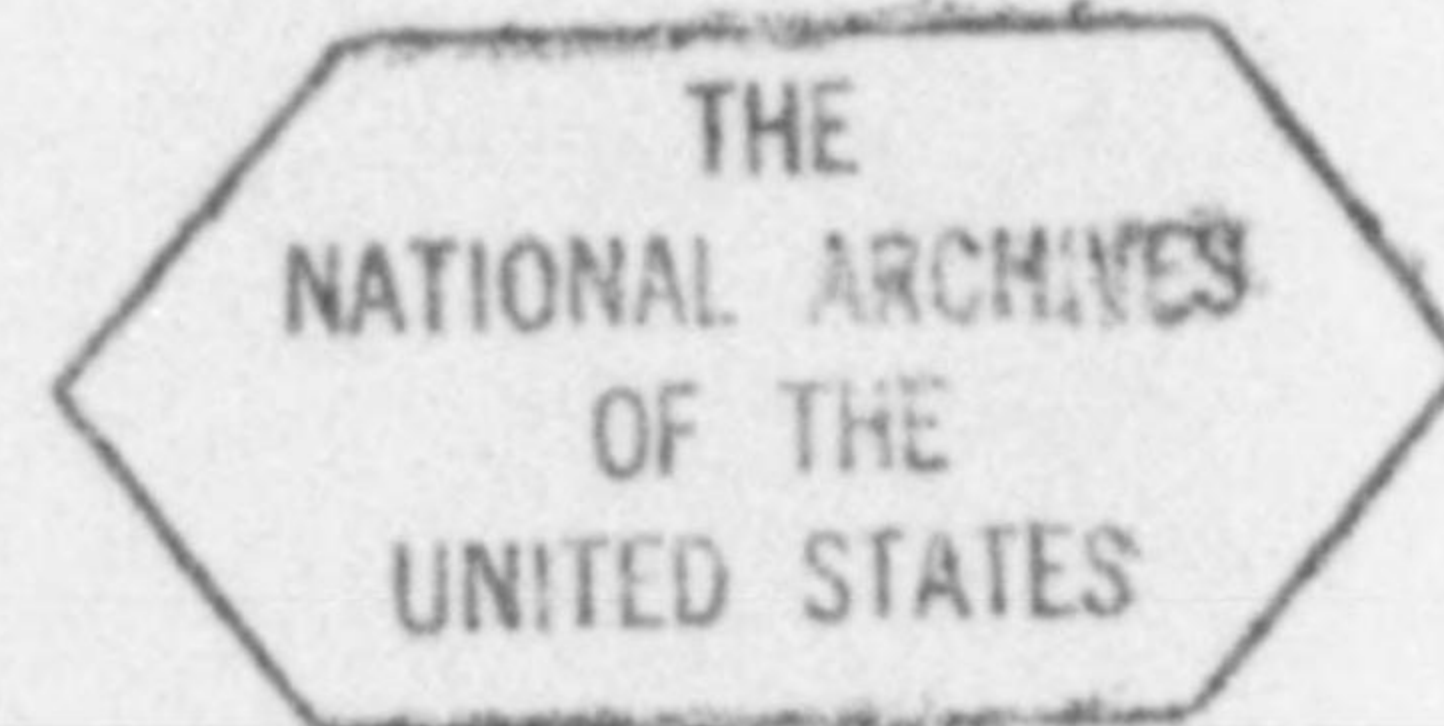


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FOR REPLICATION:NOTES OF ILO

File #2301

(The International Labour Organization)

A report on the Twenty-Seventh Session of the International Labour Conference held at Paris in 1945.

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To Paris, capital of a France still immersed in the problems of reorganising her national life after betrayal and occupation, the delegations of 48 countries travelled during the autumn of 1945 for the most important large-scale international conference to be held in Europe since its liberation from Nazi rule.

The Conference was a regular session of the International Labour Conference, the principal organ of the 26-year old International Labour Organisation. It had been invited to convene in Paris by the French Government at a meeting of the I.L.O.'s Governing Body in the previous January when the German armies were still to be completely defeated.

The Paris to which the more than 500 delegates, advisers, I.L.O. officials and newspaper correspondents came for the session was a city still struggling with the aftermath of war. Transportation, food, heat and shelter presented difficulties for every man, woman and child. But, in spite of this, Paris and France gave the Conference the welcome of an old friend, and placed at its disposal the facilities that enabled it to complete its work without delays and without too evident strain.

The session was the I.L.O.'s first since the cessation of hostilities, and for this reason it was felt by all to be fitting that it should be held in the city where the Organization's Constitution was drafted by the treaty makers at the end of the War of 1914-1918. It did not, however, by any means represent just a resumption of activities interrupted by hostilities, for the I.L.O.'s work had been carried on without halt throughout the war from headquarters transferred from Geneva to Montreal in 1940. A special session of the Conference had been held in New York in 1941, and in 1944 regular sessions had been resumed with a meeting in Philadelphia. The Paris Conference - the 27th Session since it first met in Washington in 1919 - represented, therefore, a continuation of the I.L.O.'s regular work. But at the same time it significantly marked the end of one period and the beginning of another in the Organization's history.

Meeting as it did at a time when the democratic Powers were devoting their efforts to the establishment of a new world organization to assure peace, progress and prosperity, it was both logical and necessary that the Conference should reaffirm the Organization's desire to be associated with the new international machinery of the United Nations, and should prepare the way for this new association.

The Philadelphia Conference had already given consideration to the Organization's future programme, policy and status, and the Governing Body, at its January 1945 meeting, had gone on record as affirming the I.L.O.'s wish to be linked with the general international organization that at that time was still in the blue-print stage.

The Paris Conference could express this view in more definite terms. It adopted a resolution which welcomed the entry of the United Nations Charter into force, and pledged the full co-operation of the I.L.O. with U.N.O. It then confirmed "the desire of the International Labour Organization to enter into relationship with the United Nations on terms, to be determined by agreement, which will permit the International Labour Organization, in which the representatives of workers and employers enjoy equal status with those of Government, to co-operate fully for the attainment" of the ends proclaimed in the Charter, "while retaining the authority essential for the discharge of its responsibilities under the Constitution of the Organization and the Declaration of Philadelphia".

This decision had, of course, important constitutional consequences. It meant that the I.L.O.'s relations with the League of Nations must be ended, that corresponding relationships so far as possible should be provided with U.N.O., and that the I.L.O. should be enabled to perform for itself certain services hitherto performed for it by the League.

The Conference, therefore, adopted three "urgent" amendments to the Organization's Constitution, at the same time requesting their speedy ratification by Governments.

These provided (1) that any Member of the United Nations could become an I.L.O. Member by signifying its desire to do so; (2) that the Organization might make budgetary and financial arrangements with the United Nations, and that, pending an agreement on such arrangements, the Conference should make them; and (3) that the Constitution could be amended in future by the vote of two thirds of the Member countries, including five of the eight States which hold non-elective seats on the Governing Body.

Ratifications of the amendments have begun to be registered by the Member States, and it is confidently expected they will have been accepted by a sufficient number of countries to bring them into effect by the time the next regular session of the Conference opens in Montreal on 19 September.

Important as it was, the question of the Constitution did not, however, monopolise the attention of the Conference. The agenda included five other items, four of which were thoroughly debated in committees before coming before the delegates in plenary sitting for final action.

On none of these was it proposed that the Conference's decision take the form of an international labour Convention, 67 of an international labour Convention, 67 of which had been adopted at previous sessions. On one question, however - that of minimum

standards of social policy in dependent territories - the result was the adoption of a formal recommendation to Governments supplementing a similar recommendation approved at Philadelphia.

Taken together, these recommendations constitute a code which outlines what the Conference regards as the minimum standards of living and working conditions that should prevail in non-self-governing areas. They impose on Governments which are responsible for dependent territories the obligation to take all steps within their competence to secure effective application of the standards the recommendations set forth.

On other of the agenda items, the delegates went on record by resolution. Out of the Committee on Employment came a comprehensive declaration setting forth the policies the Conference believed should guide the Member States in developing measures to provide jobs in the rehabilitation and reconversion period. Another resolution recommended a series of policies to assist Governments in framing measures for the protection of children and young workers. This declaration has been described as the Children's Charter.

The Conference also completed what the I.L.O. calls a "first discussion" of two subjects relating to young workers. These were "medical examination for fitness for employment" and "night work of children and young persons in non-industrial occupations". As a result of the discussion, lists of points relating to the two subjects are being submitted to Governments for their observations. When these are received, the Office will prepare draft international regulations on the questions for submission to the Montreal Conference.

In addition, as is customary, the Conference set up a committee to examine the reports which countries furnish on the way in which they are applying the Conventions adopted at previous sessions.

The membership of the Organization was increased by three as a result of action taken at the session. Iceland was admitted to membership, and Guatemala, which had withdrawn in 1938, and Italy, which had ceased to be a member in 1939, were readmitted. The vote on all these countries was unanimous.

The delegates also gave careful scrutiny to a report made by Edward J. Phelan, the Office's Acting Director, which reviewed the political, economic and social developments since the Philadelphia Conference, and described the Organization's activities in the same period and its current work.

Sixty-four delegates from 55 countries took part in the debate on the report in plenary sittings extending over a 15-day period, with Mr. Phelan winding up the discussion.

Voicing confidence that the negotiations to establish a relationship between the I.L.O. and U.N.C. would be satisfactory, he said that he looked forward to the future of the Organization with confidence.

He had no fear, he declared, that the authority of the Economic and Social Council to co-ordinate the work of the various functional inter-governmental agencies would be employed to restrict the I.L.O.'s activities. On the contrary, he said, the Council would reinforce the I.L.O., because it

would provide machinery to secure the application of these international economic and financial measures without which the I.L.O.'s efforts must frequently fail.

The San Francisco Charter, providing machinery whereby peace may be maintained and whereby the economic and financial problems of the world can be solved so as to ensure the prosperity of all nations", he declared, "therefore provides the indispensable conditions in which, for the first time, it will be possible for the International Labour Organization to make its full contribution to a better world.

Peace, production and social justice are the three pillars on which the future of the world must be built. To them correspond the appropriate international institutions - first, the security machinery of the United Nations, second, the economic machinery of the United Nations, comprising the Economic and Social Council and the group of specialized economic agencies dealing with international trade, finance, food and agriculture, etc., which it will be its principal function to co-ordinate, and third, the machinery of the International Labour Organization, whose task it is to promote social justice in full co-operation with other international agencies which will be its natural allies in this task.

Within a short time after the Conference ended, the ground-work was being laid to bring the I.L.O. into relationship with the United Nations. The Economic and Social Council, elected at the first session of the General Assembly of U.N., took steps to discharge its responsibility under the United Nations Charter of negotiating the terms of the association to be established between U.N. and the various specialized intergovernmental agencies like the I.L.O.

I created an 11 - nation committee and charged it with the task of entering into discussions with the functional organizations at the earliest convenient time. The negotiations with the I.L.O. scheduled to take place during the Council's second session in New York in order to make it possible for the entire Council to give approval to the agreement that is reached. Its terms will then be submitted for final ratification to the General Assembly and the next Conference of the I.L.O. when they meet in September.

File #2302

A REPORT ON THE I. L. O., AND THE UNITED NATIONS

(International Labor Organization)

(A report on recent development within the I.L.O. by the American representative of the I.F.O.L., Robert Watt. This report appeared in the July 1946 issue of the AMERICAN FEDERATIONIST, regular monthly publication of the American AFL.)

From 1919 until April, 1946, the International Labor Organization was linked to the League of Nations by constitutional ties, both having originated with the Treaty of Versailles. In April 1946 the League of Nations was officially dissolved and its assets distributed. The I.L.O. thereupon became a fully independent body, stronger perhaps than at any time in its fruitful career. Over fifty governments are members of the I.L.O., the only intergovernmental agency in which workers and employers share equal authority with the representatives of governments. Instead of seeking to go its way in isolation, it proved its loyalty to the cause of international cooperation by asking to enter into relationship with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. By late September it is likely that the I.L.O. will be officially associated with the United Nations as a specialized agency.

On May 29 and 30 the ten-member negotiating committee of the I.L.O. met the negotiating committee of the Council at Hunter College and discussed terms for a partnership to promote peace through social justice. One of the members of the tripartite delegation from the Governing Body of the I.L.O., Leon Jouhaux, had helped to create the I.L.O. at Versailles. With Samuel Gompers and President William Green the veteran leader of the French C.G.T. had fought successfully for the unprecedented goal of labor-management-government collaboration through an official intergovernmental organization to minimize the exploitation of workers anywhere. Edward J. Phelan, acting director of the I.L.O., had also been at Versailles and could recall the first conference of the I.L.O. at Washington, which was held in the then-new Navy Building on Constitution Avenue, Washington, D.C.

The I.L.O. committee had been waiting for more than two years for this opportunity. Even before the Dumbarton Oaks and San Francisco conferences, by vote of the April, 1944, International Labor Conference at Philadelphia, the I.L.O. had declared itself eager and willing to join in any form of world association which the United Nations might establish. The Governing Body, which met immediately after the Philadelphia conference, had chosen a committee and entrusted it with powers to negotiate at any time.

The Governing Body session at London, in January, 1945, had charted the course and the Paris conference in October, 1945, had confirmed the previous decision to seek to enter into relationship with the United Nations on terms to be established by mutual agreement which would preserve the tripartite principle of the I.L.O. and enable it to carry out the responsibilities set forth in its constitution and the Declaration of Philadelphia.

The General Assembly of the United Nations in February gave the Economic and Social Council its mandate to seek to bring the I.L.O. and other specialized agencies into relationship. Meetings of representatives of the

two secretariats provided the framework of a possible agreement. During the session of the I.L.O. Governing Body at Montreal in 1946, the negotiating committee met and reviewed the draft agreement.

To G. Myrdin Evans, chairman of the Governing Body and Deputy Secretary of the British Ministry of Labor, was entrusted the responsibility of spokesman. Joe Fallsworth of the British T. U., Leon Jouhaux of the French C.G.T. and myself as American workers' delegate unanimously agreed with Sir John Forbes Watson of Great Britain, J. Villares Casas of Mexico and J. Lecocq of Belgium on the employers' side that we should leave all the talking to Myrdin Evans unless he encountered such difficulties that he would call for the workers and employers to speak up to the government spokesmen across the big table grouped around Sir Ramasami Mudaliar, chairman of the Economic and Social Council.

The first afternoon was difficult session because the Council's negotiating committee had discarded much of the text agreed upon by the secretariats and evidently had not fully agreed upon a substitute. There was some diplomatic sparring between Mudaliar and Evans, with the latter proving his mettle against real odds. Evans proceeded with utmost tact and won his point that the committees should begin with the secretariats' text and discuss the deviations which either side wished. As he pointed out, both sides wanted an honorable and workable partnership and each could with confidence speak freely to accomplish that goal. Mudaliar responded with an equally cooperative statement and discussion proceeded smoothly.

The draft agreement initiated by the two chairmen on Memorial Day is subject to approval by the Economic and Social Council, the General Assembly and the International Labor Conference. Under present schedules it is hoped that all the remaining steps may be completed by late September or early October. It is the first text of an agreement with a specialized agency to be drafted by the Economic and Social Council and is serving as a model from which the subsequent texts are being fashioned with appropriate variations.

There are twenty articles and a preamble, but the gist of the agreement can be summarized briefly, even with appropriate quotations. Article I tells the effect of the agreement in simple language:

The United Nations recognizes the International Labor Organization as a specialized agency responsible for taking such action as may be appropriate under its basic instrument for the accomplishment of the purposes set forth therein.

Article II provides for reciprocal representation under which representatives of the United Nations will participate without vote in I.L.O. meetings and I.L.O. representatives will be allowed to participate in Economic Council, Assembly and Trusteeship Council meetings on matters of concern to the I.L.O.

Article III provides that the I.L.O. will consider items proposed by the United Nations and the Economic and Social Council and the Trusteeship Council will consider I.L.O. items.

Normal recommendations of the General Assembly and the Council will, under Article IV, be considered by the appropriate organ of the I.L.O. and reports made of any action taken upon them. A pledge of cooperation in any necessary Economic and Social Council steps for coordination of specialized agencies and of the United Nations is also contained in that article.

Complete and prompt exchange of information and documents between U.N. and the I.L.O. is provided under Article V, while the next article requires the I.L.O. to provide any assistance to the Security Council. Cooperation with the Trusteeship Council and with the United Nations in connection with non-self-governing territories is provided under Articles VII and VIII. Under Article IX right of access to the International Court of Justice is granted to the I.L.O. on appropriate matters.

Paragraph 1 of Article II provides:

(1) The International Labor Organization, having regard to the desirability of the headquarters of specialized agencies being situated at the permanent seat of the United Nations and to the savings that flow from such centralization, agrees to consult the United Nations before making any decision concerning the location of its permanent headquarters.

Already suffering from U.N. recruitment of key personnel, the I.L.O. places special importance on the first paragraph of Article III:

(1) The United Nations and the International Labor Organization recognize that the eventual development of a single unified international civil service is desirable from the standpoint of effective administrative coordination and with this end in view agree to develop common personnel standards, methods and arrangements designed to avoid serious discrepancies in terms and conditions of employment, to avoid competition in recruitment of personnel and to facilitate interchange of personnel in order to obtain the maximum benefit from their services.

To minimize duplication in the collection of statistical information and assure the most effective utilization of information which is obtained, a lengthy Article XII attempts to outline the respective spheres of each and to provide for suitable coordination. A somewhat similar provision with respect to the administrative and technical services is made under the following article. In accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the I.L.O. in Article XIV agrees to transmit its budget estimates to the United Nations in order that the General Assembly may make recommendations concerning it. Possible eventual inclusion of the I.L.O. within a general budget is hinted and provision made that collection of I.L.O. contributions from U.N. members may be undertaken by U.N. through a supplementary agreement. The remaining articles include arrangement for liaison between the two organizations and for revision by subsequent agreement.

Governing Body Clears Decks:

Prior to the meeting with the negotiating committee of the U.N. Governing Body of the I.L.O. met in Geneva and cleared all outstanding items. Veteran members agreed that the Governing Body has seldom held so productive a session or transacted so much business so expeditiously. The lion's share of the credit belongs to Lyddin Evans, the

patient but persistent Welshman who never expresses exasperation except when a mild explosion is needed to clear away obstacles to progress or to restore common sense.

The excellent preparation of the still understaffed International Labor Office and the encyclopedic experience of Acting Director Edward J. Flolan were other factors in expediting the efforts of the thirty-two-man Governing Body.

The workers had Joe W. North of the British T.U.C. as group chairman and Leon Jouhaux of the French C.G.T. as vice-chairman of the Governing Body. Others in our own workers' group were Bengough of Canada, Andersson of Sweden, Finet of Belgium, De Vries of South Africa and Joshi of India. The group worked together consistently and caucused before each meeting. Only on one administrative matter was there any disagreement.

The eight employers' representatives were headed by Sir John Forbes Watson of the United Kingdom as group chairman and David J. Kellerbach of the Crown-Kellerbach Corporation of San Francisco as Governing Body vice-chairman. Sir John has been attending Governing Body sessions for over twenty years and believes in subjecting each issue, especially the budget, to such close scrutiny that the other members feel complete confidence in the soundness of any proposal which has withstood his examination. Dave Kellerbach's progressive views as a vigorous and successful American employer were of great value in encouraging the group to meet the workers' group half way.

The representatives of sixteen governments included Frieda Miller, chief of the Women's Bureau in the U.S. Department of Labor, who was accompanied by Bernard Wiseman, chief of the State Department's I.L.O. Branch, as advisor on problems of importance to that department.

The major task of the Governing Body was the preparation and approval of the budget for 1947. The real struggle came in the Finance Committee where in private sessions the sun flew on many occasions. The Office had presented a well-rounded budget which appeared over-ambitious to a majority of the Committee. After preliminary discussion it was decided that certain items could be eliminated and others reduced without impairment of the efficiency of the Office. The Acting Director agreed that the planned work could be accomplished with careful management even at the reduced figure. On that assurance the workers' group agreed to accept the reduction. The eventual budget amounted to a little more than fifteen million Swiss francs and will necessitate an increased contribution from member governments, including the United States, which now pays around half a million dollars.

The Finance Committee review was a very exhaustive examination which should lead to many improvements in the presentation of future financial reports. It is significant on the first occasion when the I.L.O. has had complete autonomy over its finances, hitherto subject to the supervision of the League of Nations. One of the Governing Body's tasks was to decide whether to accept certain assets and certain administrative responsibilities in connection with the pension fund of the League of Nations.

One important outcome was the decision to establish a Committee on Staff Questions, on which Leon Jouhaux and the writer were elected as workers' representatives. Problems of establishing some common standards

with the United Nations to prevent disruptive competition and to assure reasonable tenure of office and comparable wages and conditions of employment will be considered.

The 1947 conference will be held in Geneva in June, the first meeting to be convened in Switzerland since 1939, according to another decision by the Governing Body. No decision was taken as to the return of the Office to Geneva from its wartime haven in Montreal because of uncertainty as to what the United Nations negotiating committee might request. After much discussion, agenda items for the 1947 conference were agreed upon.

A preparatory Asiatic conference, to be held in January, 1947, in New Delhi, India, was agreed upon at the request of the Indian government, which will defray half the cost. The invitation of the Chinese government to hold the first Asiatic conference in 1948 was also accepted.

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File #2303

RIFT AND REALIGNMENT
IN WORLD LABOR

By DAVID DUBINSKY

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RIFT AND REALIGNMENT IN WORLD LABOR

By David Dubinsky

WHAT is the present situation in the international labor movement? What are its problems, its trends, its perspectives? What is labor's rôle in the struggle to attain and maintain peace? Why is the World Federation of Trade Unions disintegrating? What is the outlook for a new alignment in the ranks of international labor? Here are problems whose solution deeply concerns all mankind, for the task of labor in world reconstruction is decisive.

The World Federation of Trade Unions (W.F.T.U.) was an outgrowth of the coöperation of Great Britain and Soviet Russia against their common enemy — Nazi Germany — in the Second World War. In 1941, the British Trades Union Congress (T.U.C.) had agreed to set up an Anglo-Soviet Trade Union Committee, and in 1943 and 1944 the Russians urged that this Committee be enlarged. The British T.U.C. sought to draw in the American Federation of Labor, but the A.F. of L. had had experience with the political tactics of Communists in trade unions, and rejected these overtures. It proposed instead that steps be taken to reconvene the International Federation of Trade Unions (I.F.T.U.), the activities of which had been interrupted by Hitler in 1939. However, the Russians, who were not members, wanted an entirely new International into which they would come as founders and which they would control. By January 1945, the French Confederation of Labor was securely in the grip of the Communists, and proceeded to make a pact with the Soviet trade unions to "coördinate" the postwar program of organized labor in the two countries, not only against "Fascism," but against "imperialist capitalism." Thus, months before the war was over, the Russian attack on the western democracies was already being organized.

Against considerable opposition in the Executive Committee of the I.F.T.U. — especially by the Dutch and Belgians — and under the leadership of the British T.U.C. (supported by the C.I.O., which was interested in establishing its first international labor connections), the W.F.T.U. was launched in October 1945. At its very first convention signs of weakness were evident. For

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one thing, the new organization did not include America's dominant trade union movement, the A.F. of L. Another weakness was that, unlike its predecessor, which was an international economic organization of labor, it was steeped in politics.

No one can draw a too heavy line of distinction between a political international organization of labor and an economic international organization of labor. In an international political organization there are to be found national affiliates whose members include workers of various crafts and industrial callings, and even individuals who belong to other economic groups in society. Their bond is a common ideology, a basic set of guiding political principles. On the other hand, in an international economic organization there are to be found national trade union affiliates in whose ranks are workers of varied and even conflicting political ideologies. Here, the binding force of the workers of sundry political viewpoints is devotion to the protection and promotion of their common economic interests. Both types of international labor bodies may hold some common views, just as the Second (Socialist) International — an example of a "political" labor organization — and the International Federation of Trade Unions both considered Nazism, Communism, Fascism and Falangism totalitarian and anti-democratic. But though the experiences and the enemies of two such organizations may now and then be identical, their composition, aims, structure and functions are entirely different.

The camp of labor, like the community of nations, is today in the throes of a deep crisis. No doubt the discord in the United Nations has had its influence here. But it would be a mistake to say that the conflicts within world labor parallel those which are rending the United Nations. In the W.F.T.U., the French, Italian, and Chinese delegates are lined up against the British. Only the organization which is second in strength in the ranks of American labor is represented. Most of Latin American labor, recently organized into the Inter-American Confederation of Labor, is likewise outside the federation; only the *Confederacion de Trabajadores*, which shows a Communist tendency under the leadership of Lombardo Toledano, owes the W.F.T.U. allegiance.

Reporting for the Administrative Committee when the W.F.T.U. was founded, the late Mr. Sidney Hillman declared that "The working people of the world . . . have shown that they can submerge all national and ideological differences in the

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higher interest of the great common cause which unites us all." But Lord Citrine, the first president, was more realistic, declaring that in order to succeed the World Federation must: 1, devote itself to trade union problems and keep out of politics; 2, have sound finances and efficient administration; 3, reach an agreement with the various international trade secretariats — like the International Transport, Metal, and Mine Workers Federations — and obtain their affiliation.

In three years, not one of the prerequisites has been met. The W.F.T.U. has acted primarily as a political body. It has displayed very strong bias against the democratic countries, and has championed totalitarian Russia and its satellites with intense and consistent partisanship. It has shut its eyes to the destruction of the workers' rights and labor standards in Czechoslovakia and the Balkan countries. Because of Russian hostility to the Marshall Plan, it has refused to act even on the most vital of all economic issues facing the European workers — the reconstruction of the Continent. In the United Nations Economic and Social Council, it has levelled sundry accusations against various non-Slavic countries. But it has adamantly refused to support the proposal of the A.F. of L. for a survey by the International Labor Organization of the extent of slave labor and the destruction of workers' rights in some lands — a problem which goes to the heart of trade union interests. Its publications have been unceasingly vituperative toward the United States and Britain. In Greece, the Middle East, Korea and Japan, it has intervened to oppose Britain and the United States and to give fanatic support to Russian foreign policy. Last July, after the attempt on Togliatti's life, its General Secretary, Louis Saillant, telegraphed warmest support to the Communist leader in the name of the Executive Committee. This was, in effect, support of the strictly political general strike ordered by the Communist-controlled *Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro*. It was also in rank violation of the decision made by the Executive Committee at Rome in April 1948 to establish collective leadership in the W.F.T.U. in order to prevent precisely such lone-hand acts by the General Secretary in the name of the entire world body.

Paced by the International Transport Workers' Federation, practically all the trade secretariats have officially rejected every invitation to affiliate with the World Federation. Last September, the issue came to a head when such powerful bodies as the metal

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workers, coal miners, transport workers, and others in joint meeting at Paris turned down the W.F.T.U. proposal for affiliation and established an International Coördinating Council of their own. This is undoubtedly the most crushing defeat the World Federation has received. The trade secretariats are the bloodstream of a living international labor organization; without them no labor body can deserve the name international or function on a world scale. The British labor leader, Arthur Deakin, in addressing the Margate Conference of the British Trades Union Congress in September 1948, spoke in these terms:

The World Federation of Trade Unions is rapidly becoming nothing more than another platform and instrument for the furtherance of Soviet policy. Wherever we meet, you can see the alignment of the forces. The Communists are carefully looked after and segregated from the rest. They meet in a different place. The same merry game has been going on here this week. . . . We have tried to forge the instrument that our conference asked us to. I suggest to you that it is utterly impossible. . . .

The World Federation of Trade Unions was the successor of the International Federation of Trade Unions which was an immeasurably superior organization.

Mr. Deakin is the President of the W.F.T.U.! Could there be a more bitter condemnation?

Under these circumstances, and in line with the decision of the Margate Congress, the General Council of the T.U.C. decided on October 27, 1948, to call on the World Federation to dissolve. The resolution recognized the fundamental differences which existed on questions of policy and organization and the impossibility of preventing the intrusion of politics. The final word of the General Council was: "In the event of the World Federation of Trade Unions refusing to agree to the suspension of its activities, a withdrawal from the World Federation of Trade Unions must follow." This is the end. With the T.U.C. getting out, the C.I.O. should find it extremely difficult to stay in. The trade union movements of the Low Countries and Scandinavia could hardly continue affiliation after a departure by the British. The Communists still control the majority of the trade union organizations in France and Italy; but the upshot of the split in the W.F.T.U. is likely to be a strengthening of the independent, non-Communist trade unions like the Force Ouvrière. After his return from the April 1948 executive meeting in Rome, General Secretary-Treasurer Frank Rosenblum of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, who is a vice-president of the W.F.T.U., said he was

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convinced that there was no Communist domination of the organization's affairs and that "at no time did the Russians impose their will on the Executive Bureau or the General Council." But that seems a lone opinion.

II

The experience with the W.F.T.U. confronts world labor with a number of vital questions involving fundamental policy, everyday practice and long-range perspective. The basic reason for A.F. of L. opposition to the creation of the World Federation was that the trade unions in the non-totalitarian countries were fundamentally different in nature and purpose from those under totalitarian régimes and, therefore, could not function together in one international labor body. This had been clear to members of the American Federation of Labor for some time. In democratic countries, trade unions are voluntary institutions. They are organs of large sections of the working people, grouped according to their jobs and skill, not according to political belief, and are dedicated primarily to the defense and promotion of the rights and interests of labor. In this capacity, the trade unions are free agencies which can and often do exercise considerable influence on governmental policies and legislation. Free trade unions are instruments for making democratic governments more responsive to the wishes and interests of great masses of the people.

In totalitarian countries, on the other hand, the process is completely reversed. Instead of the unions helping to determine the policies of the government, the governments determine the course of the unions. The trade unions are instruments of the government — used by it to impose its will on the masses of the people. This was the unbridgeable difference between the Nazi Labor Front and the trade unions in the United States, Britain, Scandinavia and other democratic countries. This continues to be the unbridgeable chasm between the Communist unions and the labor unions in our country. In Russia, the difference is dramatized by the following facts. The All-Union Central Federation has not held a convention since April 1932. Its most important elected officers (Tomsky and others) have been imprisoned, driven to suicide or shot. There are reports that a national trade union convention is being planned for April 1949. Those now holding office were never elected by a national convention, but selected by the Communist Party and appointed by the govern-

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ment. Citrine, in his book entitled "I Search for Truth in Russia," characterized the Soviet trade unions as "state organizations" without "any separate existence."¹

Article 126 of the Soviet Constitution provides for the existence of only one political party — namely, the Communist Party. It declares that this party is "the leading core of all organizations of the working people, both public and state." Thus it is the Soviet Constitution itself which provides that all associations of any kind whatsoever are to be run and directed by Communist Party "cells." On March 14, 1947, *Pravda*, central organ of the Russian Communist Party, declared:

The trade unions enter a new period of their activities and in this important period, the party organization must give them the necessary help, incessantly watch the preparations for the conclusion of collective agreements and strengthen the entire organizing and educational work of the unions. . . . In this respect, the directing and leading rôle of the Party organization is particularly important.

Labor's disastrous experience with Communism, Fascism, Nazism and Falangism affords tragic proof aplenty that there is no room for genuine free trade unions in countries under totalitarian yokes. Free trade unions — unions free from control by governments, employers or political parties — are a specific feature of democracy. What is more, just as there can be no free trade unions without democracy, so can there be no democracy without free trade unions.

The history of American labor reveals that free trade unionism could flourish only if all forms of "company unions" — unions promoted and dominated by employers or their agents — were rejected. The primary and permanent service of the Wagner Act to organized labor in America lies above all in its legal support of this doctrine of free unionism. But modern totalitarianism has produced a new form of company unionism — the union controlled by the totalitarian state and its monolithic party. The overriding objective of such "unions" is not the defense of the interests of the workers. The real aim is to mobilize the workers to further the political objectives and economic plans of the totalitarian state. The theory is that there cannot possibly be any conflict between the interests of the workers and the wishes of the state. In fact, these unions prevent the workers from

¹ Sir Walter Citrine, "I Search for Truth in Russia." London: Routledge, 1938, p. 185.

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organizing themselves to protect their rights which are ruthlessly invaded, and from offering any opposition to the consequences of dictatorial economic and political policies.

In Czechoslovakia, for instance, it is the *Ustredni Rada Odboru* — the Central Council of Trade Unions — which today has been the Government's main instrument for putting through the longer work week and the speed-up in labor. In Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany the government-controlled unions fulfilled similar purposes. Nor is it any different in Russia where the unions are supposed to have more than 27,000,000 members. These unions perform some praiseworthy social welfare work, but the control from above is absolute. The workers do not have the right to strike. Wages are fixed exclusively by the Government and its agencies. The factory manager has more power than the manager of any non-union plant in America. Semi-military discipline prevails. The only collective agreements which the Russian workers know are those offering total compliance with the Government's economic plans and the promotion of Stakhanovism.

While the Soviet "trade unions" act inside the U.S.S.R. as agents of the Government and its various departments charged with managing Russian economy, their rôle on the international scene is that of instruments of Soviet foreign policy and nationalistic expansion. That is why in the 1930's the A.F. of L. opposed every move to affiliate the Soviet unions to the International Federation of Trade Unions; it even threatened to withdraw if they were admitted. Significantly, the unions in Great Britain and other countries, which at one time favored an alliance with the Russian unions, were motivated by political rather than trade union objectives, stemming from the situation in foreign affairs prevailing at the moment, *i.e.* the need to form an alliance between the democratic countries of Europe and Russia against Nazi Germany. In 1945, the alignment with Russian unions and the creation of the W.F.T.U. were thought of as duplicating the pattern of coöperation of the Big Three at Teheran, Yalta and Potsdam.

The American Federation of Labor has held that even in the realm of foreign affairs, military or diplomatic coöperation with the U.S.S.R. should not be permitted to becloud the diametrically opposite purposes and characters of trade unions in a democracy and those under totalitarianism — whether the form of the absolute state be Fascist, Nazi, Communist or Falangist. In so far as

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the international labor movement is concerned, the A.F. of L. has always insisted that the preservation and promotion of basic civil liberties — such as freedom of speech, press and assembly — are prerequisite to the existence of a bona fide free trade union movement. It has always maintained that any attempt to obscure this vital truth jeopardizes the gains which labor took many decades to achieve.

The experience with the W.F.T.U. has brought into bold relief the folly of attempted coöperation by free trade union movements with the state-controlled company unions of Russia and her satellites. Such coöperation serves only as a convenient avenue for Communist infiltration and capture of free trade unions. In France, Italy, Latin America, Japan, Korea, South-eastern Asia and the Middle East, the World Federation has been of inestimable aid to Communist agents in penetrating the ranks of labor, seizing control of labor organizations, and poisoning the minds of the workers with pro-Soviet and anti-democratic propaganda. At the Rome meeting of the Executive Committee of the W.F.T.U., Communists such as Di Vittorio, Kuznetsov and Saillant succeeded in preserving the thin façade of so-called "international trade union unity." This saved the Communist control of the Italian C.G.I.L. There was a growing trend against the Communists in the ranks of Italian labor after the April 1948 elections, but this declaration of formal unity checked it.

Such coöperation has served only to prevent the trade unions in the democratic countries from playing their rightful rôle in world affairs. If the free trade unions have not yet been fully mobilized for the success of the European Recovery Program, it is because they have been hog-tied by their association in the W.F.T.U. with the Russian and satellite "unions" which have individually and collectively worked to sabotage the Marshall Plan. Communists outside the Iron Curtain have, of course, worked with them.

Incidentally, the bitter opposition of the Communists inside the World Federation to postwar reconstruction of the western democratic countries should surprise no one. This implacable hostility to the Marshall Plan is only a continuation of the attitude toward reconstruction of "capitalist" countries maintained by the Red International of Labor Unions (the old Profintern), the precursor of the W.F.T.U. Alexander Lozovsky, General Secretary of the Profintern, declared his opposition to reconstruction

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after World War I in language startlingly similar to the tirades of Kuznetsov, Saillant and Di Vittorio against E.R.P.:

But we consider this disturbance of the capitalist system, not as a temporary one, not as an accidental one which may be cured, but as a crisis which will bring present society to final catastrophe. On the one hand, therefore, we have an attempt to cure and in the future to attain the normal development of the capitalist organism, and on the other, an effort not to remedy it but to "cure it to death" if we may so express it. Not an attempt to revive it, but to destroy this society, which from our point of view is too slow in dying. . . . Our international . . . has for its aims the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This is stated in our constitution and in the main resolutions of our Congresses.

Had it not been for the extensive educational activities of the Free Trade Union Committee of the A.F. of L. in Germany after the Second World War, and for its energetic intervention there in behalf of free trade unionism, the Communists acting through the machinery of the World Federation might by now have seized control of the reviving German trade unions. An attempt to assume full dictatorial power over the whole country would undoubtedly have followed, as in Czechoslovakia, and could have been thwarted only by the use of force by the American and British armies of occupation, possibly at the risk of war.

Not an instance can be cited where the association of democratic trade unions with state-controlled unions in the World Federation has been of any use in persuading the totalitarian workers' organizations to bring pressure to bear on their dictatorial governments for the improvement of labor standards, the extension of human rights in domestic affairs, or the pursuit of peaceful policies in international relations. Never has the W.F.T.U. assisted any struggling free democratic union in any country. On the contrary, this collaboration has greatly facilitated the work of the Communist Quislings as instruments of Russian imperialism. Moreover, so long as the British Trades Union Congress and the American C.I.O. remain in the World Federation they are in the very uncomfortable position of seeming to sponsor, in the international field, the very practices which they bitterly fight at home. Both organizations have hitherto denied this. But it is solely because of their association with the Communist unions in the World Federation that they have been lukewarm to the idea of an energetic international drive to smash the Communist campaign against the E.R.P. Arthur Deakin's proposal at the Margate Congress to dissolve the W.F.T.U.

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marks the beginning of the end of this unhappy collaboration.

It has been argued by some that if the A.F. of L. had affiliated with the World Federation, the democratic forces would have been strong enough to prevent it from becoming a tool of Russian foreign policy, and might even have given control to the free trade unions. I cannot claim such powers of miraculous healing for the A.F. of L., despite the encouraging expansion of its international activities in recent years. The Rome sessions of the Executive Committee of the World Federation proved again that in any organization in which the Russians participate, criticism by democratic organizations can, at best, result only in frustrating and dangerous compromises which leave all the trump cards in the hands of the Communists. It is not possible for a devout Communist to make a concession in good faith. In domestic affairs, no free trade union can or will accept the affiliation of a company union which takes its orders from the employers. The genuine union would delude itself if it expected that company outfit to submit to decisions which were arrived at democratically. It is a far more crass and costly illusion to suppose that democratic organizations can expect the "company unions" of totalitarian masters to act otherwise.

In the W.F.T.U., furthermore, the Russians are in a position to concoct for themselves an overwhelming majority whenever they find it necessary. In the trade union field, as in politics and government, Russian rulers do not actually count their members. All they have to do to get a majority in the World Federation is to report a mass influx of members into their own unions or those of the satellite states. The Russians and other Communists in control of the world labor organization would resist inspection of their membership records with as much vigor as their diplomats resist international inspection and control of atomic weapons. By now, the liberal and democratic forces should have learned that in joining "front" organizations they stand no chance of outplaying the unscrupulous and ruthless Communists. There is no way of defeating an opponent in parliamentary manoeuvre if the rules of the game mean nothing to him.

III

But if it is apparent that collaboration with Communist unions is impossible, it is no less clear that international labor solidarity is desirable. "Labor" represents millions of human beings, in

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many countries. Genuine international labor coöperation among free organizations can be a powerful stimulus to world peace and can help guarantee it. With world economy growing more and more integrated, and the various national productive systems so largely dependent on each other, labor's interest in continued production and adequate living standards necessarily assumes a far more international character than ever before. In fact, the success of the E.R.P. in an economic and social sense can be assured only through the full international coöperation of the free trade unions in the countries concerned.

The seeds of such coöperation have already borne some fruit. Last March and last July, the free trade unionists of Europe and the representatives of the A.F. of L., the C.I.O., the United Mine Workers and the Railway Labor Unions gathered in London to work out ways of ensuring the collaboration and full mobilization of all the bona fide labor organizations in support of the E.R.P. At these conferences nationalistic viewpoints receded before a continental approach. A Trade Union Advisory Committee was established to function in close coöperation with the Office for European Economic Coöperation for the purpose of aiding the economic recovery of the Continent and protecting and promoting labor's rights, interests and standards in the consummation of this program. In short, a fundamental realignment in the ranks of world labor is in progress. The need for protecting the rights of the workers as human beings and as producers, the urgency of rescuing the world from hunger, the necessity for speeding post-war reconstruction, and the fight to win an enduring peace against the menace of totalitarian aggression provide a timely and realistic basis for international collaboration by the free trade unions of the world. Once the British T.U.C. frees itself completely from its paralyzing ties with the World Federation, the Trade Union Advisory Committee will be able to go forward. It has great potentialities. It represents all the non-Communist trade union bodies of Western Europe and the United States, and if it becomes really active in mobilizing labor for the European Recovery Program, it will gain constant strength and authority.

A new and genuine international federation of free trade unions is in the making, though we cannot yet set a date for its birth. The Russians and their satellite unions will, of course, resist such a realignment to the bitter end. They will continue to exploit the name "World Federation of Trade Unions" to the limit, even

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though its membership is narrowed to include only Russian-controlled unions. In counteracting these Communist attacks, the rôle of the British T.U.C. will be decisive in Europe, for continental labor is still divided and weak, especially in France and Italy. The reviving German trade union movement is, naturally, weakened by its very setting in a vanquished, partitioned and occupied country. And American labor is still divided, though one can hope that the increased unity of action abroad will stimulate organic unity between the A.F. of L. and the C.I.O. at home.

A new and most significant factor in the international labor movement is the vastly expanded participation by the A.F. of L. in world labor affairs. This is not a temporary manifestation of passing interest, but something which has been gaining momentum in the last three years and providing new hope and encouragement to democratic trade unionists everywhere. The refusal of the A.F. of L. in 1945 to join the W.F.T.U. was accompanied by activities in the sphere of international labor on an unprecedented scale. Had the A.F. of L. shown such interest and energy while it was affiliated to the International Federation of Trade Unions, the latter would probably never have been dissolved and the W.F.T.U. could never have been created.

The constructive approach of the A.F. of L. toward international labor coöperation has not been limited to counter-propaganda against Communism and other aspects of totalitarianism. The San Francisco Convention of 1947 adopted a resolution, presented by the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, which first put forward the idea of an international conference of free trade unions to mobilize labor for the Marshall Plan. It is the A.F. of L. which has been most consistent in emphasizing that the free trade unions must not be on the defensive, but must exercise vigorous initiative and coöperate their activities for democracy, reconstruction and peace on an international scale. The avowedly non-Socialist A.F. of L. has also insisted that aid to European countries must not interfere with the fundamental democratic right of the people of each country to decide freely the forms of economic organization and ownership of their basic industries and public utilities. This is the only way to meet and defeat internationally-directed assaults on human liberty. The recent crisis in French coal mining where the Communist strong-arm squads — under Cominform orders — seized mines and wrecked their

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machinery to cripple the part played by France in the E.R.P. shows the urgency of international democratic labor action.

The increasing representation accorded American and European labor in the administration of the E.R.P. is a valuable safeguard against damage to efforts for continental reconstruction — both from the so-called Left, and from the predatory, selfish, nationalist interests on the Right. This special E.R.P. task should reinforce the appointment of labor attachés to all United States Embassies so that the State Department will have a better understanding of labor unions and labor problems in all the countries.

Whether the Communists call their world organization and central bureau Profintern or W.F.T.U., whether they call it Comintern or Cominform, they never lessen the activity of their armies of agents, propagandists, party members and fellow-travellers. Whether a Communist Party in any country calls itself by that name or some other name, whether a "front" organization calls itself the League Against War and Fascism one day, or the American Peace Mobilization the next, the essential characteristic of all these organizations as segments of an international movement for Bolshevik world domination does not change. The lesson must be reiterated: the attempt to work with Communists is futile folly. The lesson applies to trade unions, to other organizations and to individuals. When working with Communists for a good cause we hurt that cause, because it is sure to be used by them as an instrument for achieving their own different aims. This is confirmed by Stalin himself in his "Foundations of Leninism" when he says: "A revolutionist [Communist] may sponsor a reform because he sees in it a means for linking up constitutional action with unconstitutional action, because he feels he can make use of it as a screen behind which he can strengthen his clandestine work." Collaboration by trade unionists and liberals with Communists serves only to provide them with a means of deception and with prestige which they subsequently exploit for party purposes.

This has been our experience in the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union. As head of the C.I.O., John L. Lewis had considerable and costly experience of this sort. Philip Murray's experience as head of the C.I.O. bears out this truth. The leaders of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers — the late Sidney Hillman and his co-workers — once believed they could work with the Communists in the American Labor Party. But though

they have remained faithful to Mr. Hillman, these trade unionists have had to withdraw from the American Labor Party on the grounds that it is a Communist Party auxiliary. Henry Wallace, in the so-called Progressive Party, is today in the stage where Lewis and Hillman once were. The question arises: must trade unionists and liberals burn their fingers badly before learning this incontrovertible lesson? Was it really necessary to go through this very expensive experience of collaborating with the Communists, first in the C.I.O. and then in the W.F.T.U.?

Precisely because Communists place the capture and control of the trade unions as the first prerequisite for foisting their dictatorship on any industrial country, it is imperative for the democratic trade unions of all countries to pool their resources and join their forces in the protection and promotion of their welfare and liberties.

Toward meeting this need, the A.F. of L. has been maintaining permanent representatives in Europe and in Germany. The Free Trade Union Committee of the A.F. of L. has been publishing monthly the *International Free Trade Union News* in English, French, German and Italian. Moral and material support is being rendered to democratic trade union forces in France, Germany, Italy, Japan and Latin America. A paramount reason for the effectiveness of the A.F. of L's activities in the international labor field has been their entirely independent character. At times, we had to take sharp issue with our Government over the failure of the American military authorities to accord sufficient recognition and rights to the reviving free labor movement as a powerful buttress of democracy in Germany. We have had similar experiences in Japan.

The free trade union movement is a bulwark of democracy, indispensable to its defense and progress. No effective coöperation of the democratic countries is possible without world coöperation of free labor. Postwar economic reconstruction will stabilize democratic institutions and enhance their progress only if it is accompanied by improved living standards for the working people everywhere. The safeguarding and improvement of the living standards of the working people are the first task of the free trade unions. In the present world situation, this can be achieved only by international action. The international solidarity of democratic labor and the world-wide and lasting coöperation of the free trade unions are an indispensable practical goal.

File #2304

Free Trade Unions leave the W.F.T.U.

Statement by representatives of the British Trades Union Congress, the Congress of Industrial Organisations, U.S.A., and the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of the Netherlands, who took part in the meeting of the Executive Bureau of the World Federation of Trade Unions in Paris, January 17-19, 1949.

FOREWORD

NO one who took part in the London and Paris Conferences, which led in 1945 to the formation of the World Federation of Trade Unions, thought that the task of creating an effective world Trade Union International would be easy. It was a profound experiment in which Communist and non-Communist organisations had to endeavour to find the greatest possible measure of common agreement. It was known that conflicting views would have to be reconciled, but it was hoped that there would be a common endeavour to foster goodwill, and to build an organisation which would command the respect, not only of Trade Unionists everywhere, but also of the international organisations with which a World Federation would have to associate.

Differences developed even in the conception of the type of organisation and the manner in which it should function.

To those national centres which are Communist-dominated it was important that the Federation should be an instrument for the world-wide dissemination of their propaganda. Many of them had little or no experience of international Trade Union work and the part which should be played in the essential industrial, social and economic functions of a World Trade Union International. Their conceptions were determined by political ideology.

On the other hand there were those national centres with a long experience of Trade Union work in the international field. From experience they demanded that the Federation should be sound structurally and administratively, that it should represent world Trade Union opinion fairly and that it should fulfil Trade Union objectives. Those who struggled for these essentials did so in the face of constant misrepresentation and abuse.

It became impossible to continue on the faulty basis and lack of goodwill which we had constantly striven to remedy.

According to our mandate, we sought a recommendation to national centres in favour of a suspension of activities which would give time for wiser counsels to prevail. This also proved to be impossible.

We now direct the attention of the Free Trade Union Movements of the world to the facts contained in this Statement and would urge their consideration of their own position in the W.F.T.U., now completely dominated by Communist organisations, which are themselves controlled by the Kremlin and the Cominform.

JAMES CAREY, C.I.O.

ARTHUR DEAKIN, T.U.C.

EVERT KUPERS, N.V.V.

VINCENT TEWSON, T.U.C.

FREE TRADE UNIONS LEAVE THE W.F.T.U.

On 19 January, 1949, in Paris, during a meeting of the Executive Bureau of the W.F.T.U., the three non-Communist representatives, (the British T.U.C., the American C.I.O. and the Dutch N.V.V.), announced the withdrawal of their respective organisations from the W.F.T.U. and left the meeting room.

The World Federation of Trade Unions issued a Press statement on 18 January, 1949, and subsequently a declaration purporting to deal with what transpired at the Executive Bureau meetings from 17 to 19 January. Statements made in the Communist Press in many countries have followed the usual course of attempting to misrepresent the actual position for propaganda purposes. Certain main facts have to be clear for any proper appreciation of the attitude of those national centres whose representatives withdrew from the meeting of the Executive Bureau on 19 January.

Workers' Movement and the Communists: 1917-1941

In order the better to understand the significance of developments leading up to this momentous event, let us first recall some aspects of the relationships between the Communist and non-Communist workers' forces between 1917 and 1941.

There was no doubt about the enthusiasm with which the organised workers of the world greeted the overthrow of Tsarism in 1917. During the early years of the Soviet regime, the workers' organisations of other countries accorded effective and selfless aid to the efforts of the Russian workers.

Having secured mastery in Soviet Russia, the Bolshevik leaders declared it to be the duty of the organised workers in all other countries to establish the "dictatorship of the proletariat" by overthrowing their existing regimes. In the few instances where these attempts were made, they suffered a resounding defeat. In most countries, however, common sense and a correct estimate of the implications put the workers on guard against the disastrous adventures into which the Communists tried to lure them.

Much of the bitterness which characterised the period 1917-1941 dates from this time. The Russian Bolsheviks accused the democratic workers' leaders of being responsible for the failures, both of actual revolutions or of attempts to capture the workers' movement for the policy. From that point, it was only a short step to characterise these leaders as "traitors to the working class," "agents in the service of capitalist reaction," "social fascists," etc. A scurrilous campaign was undertaken as early as 1920-21-22 to capture the trade union or political workers' organisations in the democratic countries. Except in rare instances, this campaign failed everywhere.

Then, an attempt was made to destroy the trade union organisations and the democratic parties, rather than allow them to continue after the failure of the Communists to capture their leadership. There were numerous splits made by the Communists in those countries where the trade union movement had developed. But the Communists were never successful in achieving any appreciable influence on working-class action outside Soviet Russia.

Exceptions were Germany, where they distinguished themselves by united action with the Nazis in 1932, and France, where on 6 February 1934 they joined with the Fascists in a common attempt to overthrow the democratic parliamentary regime of France. In fact, the following year the Communist trade unions were saved from bankruptcy by the Popular Front.

Subsequently, they changed their tactics. Unable to succeed from the outside in destroying the democratic workers' forces, they employed the catchwords of

"united front," "popular front" or "trade union unity," in order to attain their objectives by action within the workers' organisations. But whatever the tactics employed by the Communists, their objective never varied: the ideological, and if possible the physical, destruction of democratic trade union forces.

But in all this period, the Communists were never more divorced from the real feelings of the organised democratic workers than when they sought to justify the Hitler-Stalin Pact of August 1939 and the rape of Poland.

The New Phase: 1941-1945

A completely new situation was created on 22 June 1941 when Hitler's aggression against Soviet Russia automatically put the latter into the camp of the democratic nations who were fighting for the defence of human liberty and for social progress. To the degree that this common struggle of the American, British, Soviet and other Allies progressed, a symbolic sense of world unity was created, feelings of solidarity among their peoples were strengthened, and an immense hope stirred hearts everywhere. This hope was that military victory over Fascism and Nazism would be succeeded by a universal, sincere friendship, opening up prospects of fruitful co-operation among all the peoples on earth, ensuring them peace, justice and happiness, after their terrible trials.

Naturally, the organised workers of all countries were the most ardent promoters of this fraternisation. It was the General Council of the British Trades Union Congress which broke through the isolation to which the Russian trade unions had condemned themselves by their arrogant demands in the 'twenties. On the initiative of the General Council of the T.U.C., the Anglo-Soviet Trade Union Committee was set up in 1941.

In the non-Communist trade union movements, there was a readiness to forget the wrongs and the vilifications of the past. It was in this spirit that, led by prominent and experienced trade union personalities, a great number of trade unionists devoted themselves to the task of creating a world federation of trade unions, to include, without discrimination, all the trade union organisations of the world.

London and Paris Conferences, 1945

The call for a conference to take place in June 1944 was sent out by the British T.U.C. But the D-day operations on 6 June 1944 obliged them to postpone it. (Incidentally this postponement is now being stigmatised as a "pretext" on the part of the British T.U.C. to delay unity.) The Conference was actually held in London from 6-17 February, 1945. The organisations which refused to participate in this first Conference, and to adhere to the W.F.T.U. in October, 1945, were extremely few in number. Caught in the general enthusiasm and in the hope of establishing mutual confidence, the great experiment began.

Early Misgivings

However, from the beginning, some uneasiness was felt within those trade union movements with long experience in international collaboration. It was noted, for example, that a stream of newly-created organisations in economically-backward countries, which used to count membership in tens of thousands, were announcing membership figures, which there were no means of checking, in the million mark. These paper figures threatened to submerge those organisations with long experience, well-established reputations, memberships and traditions. Moreover, these same movements, rich in their long experience of international trade union

life, had some practical advice to give to the potentially formidable, but young and untried organisation—particularly to hold itself well aloof from political activities, in order to avoid conflicts between ideologies. They predicted that otherwise the existence of the W.F.T.U. would be imperilled. The W.F.T.U. could only assure its existence by concentrating on trade union, social and economic demands.

The International Trade Secretariats

What this meant was that, at all costs, industrial activities of the International Trade Secretariats (I.T.S.) had to be included in the W.F.T.U.

At the time of the Paris Conference in October 1945, most of the Trade Secretariats had not been resuscitated after their enforced inactivity during the war. Consequently, the T.U.C. representatives there and at subsequent W.F.T.U. meetings urged the need for speedy action in arriving at satisfactory arrangements with the Trade Secretariats. They argued the importance of concluding these arrangements prior to the I.T.Ss. resuming their full activities. This advice was left unheeded.

On the other hand, the I.T.Ss. proved their good faith by refraining from immediately resuming their activities, pending the outcome of negotiations with the World Federation.

Agreement was reached in the early stages on the principle of full autonomy of the I.T.S.s in their special trade activities within the W.F.T.U. In attempting to work out the precise regulations which would apply, the organisations vitally concerned with this matter found themselves faced with endless negotiations, protracted over a period of three years. During this period, the various concessions made by the W.F.T.U. fell short of the original understanding. This breach of faith undermined the confidence of the I.T.Ss. in the W.F.T.U.

It must be said clearly that responsibility for the delay which has occurred, lying as it does at the door of the Soviet trade unions, confirms other evidence that they were not so much concerned in the establishment and operation of the World Federation as a trade union international as they were with its political potentialities.

In the course of the three years of negotiations, the Trade Secretariats were compelled under pressure from their constituents to restart their activities and proceed with the convening of their congresses and the election of their officers. To their resentment at the protracted negotiation was added their doubt of the good faith of the W.F.T.U.

The I.T.Ss.—the Final Stages

Following the Rome meeting, in May 1948, the W.F.T.U. Secretariat made preparations for the convocation of a joint Conference of the Executive Bureau and the representatives of the I.T.Ss. The General Secretary of the W.F.T.U., Louis Saillant, was personally responsible for the invitations having been issued in such a form as to evoke the profoundest suspicions in the minds of I.T.S. representatives.

There were very real and solid fears that the aim of the W.F.T.U. in its obstruction towards the conclusion of satisfactory conditions for the incorporation of the I.T.Ss. into the Federation was the creation of a situation in which ultimately the Federation would exert political and restrictive influences on the industrial activities of the Secretariats.

Their growing suspicions of W.F.T.U. intentions were strengthened by the last-minute reversal of policy in September 1948, on the part of those who had all along prevented the reaching of a solution acceptable to all concerned.

In September 1948, the I.T.Ss. declared, without ambiguity, that they had become convinced that those who held the majority in the W.F.T.U. did not want to create

Trade Departments which would embody and realise the value of I.T.S. work. The I.T.Ss. were convinced that the Communist leaders in reality wanted to paralyse their activities.

The W.F.T.U. had offered stubborn resistance for three years to the implementation of their original promises. In September 1948, when breakdown appeared inevitable, came the sudden offer that it should be fulfilled. It is not surprising that with this background such an offer could not dispel the conviction of bad intention and bad faith.

And lest there be any doubt about the matter, let it be remembered that the I.T.Ss. are not organisms outside and above the trade union movement but regular long-established units within it which consist of the individual trade unions affiliated in their respective countries to the national centres.

This applies almost 100 per cent. to Great Britain and all the other West European countries, as well as to some extra-European countries such as Canada and South Africa among others. Up to early 1948, even Czechoslovakia and Poland had a number of individual trade unions affiliated to the I.T.Ss.

Thus, the Executive Bureau found itself confronted in September 1948 with the complete and final failure of the negotiations with the I.T.Ss. It is well to remember here that from the outset the British T.U.C. made its final approval of the W.F.T.U. constitution expressly dependent upon the realisation of a satisfactory agreement with the I.T.Ss.

The repeated warnings of the need for speed in securing agreement with the International Trade Secretariats and for improving the effectiveness and prestige of the World Federation itself demonstrated the anxiety of those national centres who have now left the W.F.T.U. to make the World Federation a body in some way commensurate with the cherished idea of effective international trade union unity.

Good Faith: The Touchstone of Success

The position of the I.T.S.s was serious, but another, even more basic factor has to be stressed. In order to maintain the W.F.T.U. as an effective organisation, composed as it was of national trade union movements so different in ideology, origin and traditions, it was essential that it be based on good faith in the individual trade union relationships, sincerity in expressions of fraternity, and mutual respect for the various conceptions.

In the light of three years' experience, we have the right to ask whether these moral conditions have ever existed. If the declarations of these past months are to be believed, the Soviet trade union chiefs and their friends have never ceased harbouring a hostile mistrust of the non-Communist militants. Yet in private contacts, and at social functions, the Soviet delegates have given assurances of their personal desire for good relations. Once back at home, however, they ruthlessly pursued a course which was the very antithesis of their protestations of good faith.

Soviet Trade Unions Demand "Removal" of Non-Communist Trade Union Leaders

As for the official organs of the Communist trade union organisations, the calumnies systematically poured out against the non-Communist trade union leaders can no longer be counted. "Trud," the official organ of the Central Council of Soviet Trade Unions, in its issue of 16 November, 1947, went so far as cynically and brutally to demand that the W.F.T.U. rid itself of its "reformist" leaders.

This was significant. How were the "reformist" trade union leaders to be removed? In spite of repeated allegations that representatives of "reformist" national centres

were not really representing the views of their constituents, it must have been clear that this attitude was rather a case of the wish being father to the thought.

No representative on the executive bodies could really believe that the T.U.C., C.I.O., N.V.V. and other free trade union representatives were not responsible leaders, faithfully representing the views of their national centres.

It was a fact, however, that these "reformist" leaders were standing in the way of the World Federation acting merely as an organisation for political propaganda and activity, and were inconveniently insisting on a practical and orderly progress. As they could not be removed on the allegation of their "unrepresentative capacity," can it be that there have been designs to make it impossible for the national centres concerned to remain within the World Federation?

That the Communists have now attained the "yes man" type of international organisation for which they have long striven, is indicated by the statement made by Solovyev, a Soviet representative, at the recent W.F.T.U. Executive Committee meeting, when he stated: "In three days, decisions were taken on all questions on the agenda concerning which it had been impossible for several months to make any progress because of the opposition."

Experience of W.F.T.U. Delegations

During the first months of the W.F.T.U.'s existence, it could be seen that the Communist trade unionists were systematically pressing demands of a political character. Thus, in various missions, the Communist delegates in every instance tried to introduce one-sided political objectives. Let us take the example of the two delegations to Germany. What most interested the Communist delegates were shortcomings in denazification procedure in the British, American and French zones. Shortcomings there undeniably were in these three zones, and the representatives of the German workers, availing themselves of the liberty which they enjoyed in these zones, did not fail to report them to the delegations of the W.F.T.U. And British, American and French representatives on these delegations made themselves responsible for following up complaints relating to their country's zones.

By contrast, in the Soviet zone, the trade union organisation had been so well prepared by the Soviets and their German Communist agents that no workers' delegate would have risked revealing the abuses committed by the Soviet military authorities in their zone. Moreover, in Germany, as in many other countries, the Communists had simplified to the utmost this process of denazification. Indeed, the adhesion of a Nazi to the Communist Party was sufficient reason for exonerating him entirely in the eyes of the Soviet authorities. Nevertheless, it is a matter of record that Nazis were found in the Soviet zone by W.F.T.U. delegations. It is also a matter of fact that Soviet representatives on such delegations bitterly resented any questions on the part of other members implying criticism of Soviet administration.

There were tense struggles within the delegations to Germany to prevent the Communist delegates from turning the reports into a propaganda instrument directed against the Western democratic nations and approving, if not complimenting, the Soviet administration.

Later, the Communist and non-Communist members of the delegations to Iran and Japan were unable to agree on the conclusions to their reports, because of the efforts of the Communist delegates to present the acts and policies of the Soviet authorities and of the Communist Parties as of a purely democratic character, while representing everything done or said by the democratic nations of the West, and by

the movements which supported them, as being the deeds of vile reactionaries who were oppressing the poor peoples who were longing for freedom and independence. In fact, the final Report of the delegation to Japan (March 1947) has never been presented.

Nevertheless, for a long time the trade union leaders of so-called "reformist" tendency, continued to associate themselves with all the W.F.T.U. declarations against the threat to freedom constituted by the last vestiges of Fascism and Nazism, naming Western Germany, Italy, Greece, Spain, Argentina and many other countries. Yet for the sake of maintaining international trade union unity they even paid the price of abstention from protest against violation of this same liberty in the bolshevised countries—the territories annexed by Soviet Russia, the Soviet Zones of Germany and Austria or the so-called "countries of people's democracy."

Communist Hostility to Marshall Plan

But the conclusive evidence that practical work with Communist elements in the W.F.T.U. was not to be possible was the concerted aggression of all their forces, directed by the Cominform, since November, 1947, against the "reformist" trade union organisations which were striving to reconstruct their countries' economy with the aid of the American people.

In November, 1947, Mr. James Carey came to the W.F.T.U. meeting in Paris on behalf of the C.I.O. to explain in full detail the American aid programme now known as E.R.P. As is well known, American Trade Unions played a major role in all the stages of development of American Aid to Europe—from a mere proposal right through to the determination of the legislation adopted to operate the E.R.P. Hence, the indignation of the C.I.O. representative in the Executive Bureau, Mr. James Carey, when American trade union endeavours and the American aid proposals as a whole were described by the Communist spokesmen in the Bureau as "a devilish scheme of Wall Street to enslave the free countries of Europe."

E.R.P. in Accord With W.F.T.U. Aspirations

One of the main objects of the W.F.T.U. when it was created in October, 1945, was to make the fullest contribution to the economic recovery of the war-stricken countries. At the November, 1947, meeting of the Executive Bureau, it was shown clearly that the Communist majority of the W.F.T.U. was not willing to implement that important pledge. On the contrary, they were determined to prevent the success of those whose efforts were being directed towards assisting in the early reconstruction of their countries, and prosperity for their peoples.

A bitter fight developed between the Communist and non-Communist representatives in the Bureau as to whether the C.I.O. representative was even to be allowed to make his statement. A vote was taken in which the Soviet and Italian delegates, as well as the General Secretary, voted against the proposal to give the C.I.O. representative an opportunity merely to state the facts about the Marshall Plan. Due to absences on the Communist side, the non-Communist minority for once carried the vote, and Mr. Carey was permitted to make his statement. But no debate followed. It was, however, understood that a discussion would take place at the Bureau meeting scheduled for February, 1948, when the Executive Bureau would decide whether it would make any pronouncement on the Marshall Plan.

In the course of the meeting, the Communist representatives did not hide their hostility to the Marshall Plan. After the meeting, their press left no doubt about the manner in which they were to fight and sabotage every effort that would be made in

Europe to relieve the distress of the people and to put their countries on a sound economic basis.

Unions Act in Default of W.F.T.U.

The February, 1948, meeting of the Bureau was put off on various pretexts on the part of Communist members, who made offers to hold the meeting in April or May. But the Marshall Aid programme was to be put into operation in the beginning of April. It was essential, therefore, for the National Trade Union Centres concerned to co-ordinate their views before that date, particularly as they desired to obtain adequate representation in the E.R.P. machinery which was to be established.

The avoidance by the Federation of declaring any official policy on this programme left those national centres which recognised the importance of the American proposals in relation to the reconstruction of their economies no option, but to co-ordinate their activities outside the Federation.

This inability to get any discussion inside the W.F.T.U., or any declaration of policy by the W.F.T.U. on the proposals for American Aid to Europe, was the direct and sole cause of the establishment of the E.R.P. trade union machinery. The desire of the national centres concerned had been to secure a co-ordination of their activities on E.R.P. *within* the framework of the World Federation of Trade Unions.

This failure to define policy on the part of the W.F.T.U. did not, however, deter Communist-dominated national centres—and the General Secretary of the W.F.T.U. himself—from attacking and endeavouring to discredit the purpose of E.R.P.

All their violent protestations against the principles of E.R.P. have not deterred the Communists of Eastern Europe from establishing in January, 1949, their own "E.R.P." under the title of "Council for Economic Mutual Assistance," which has as its task "an exchange of experience in the economic field, the rendering of technical assistance to one another and the rendering of mutual assistance in regard to raw materials, foodstuffs, machinery, equipment, etc."

The invitation to participate in the Council was sent only to obedient Soviet satellites. Yugoslavia made a formal protest at not being invited and was informed in a very bitter reply from the Soviet Union that her participation in the Council for Economic Mutual Assistance "is possible only in the event that the Yugoslav Government gives up its hostile policy in regard to the U.S.S.R. and the countries of people's democracy and reverts to the old policy of friendship." It should be borne in mind in this connection and in direct contrast that the invitation to the first E.R.P. Conference was issued to all European Governments, excluding Spain, but including the Soviet Union and her satellites and it is by their own refusal that they do not participate in E.R.P.

Purpose of E.R.P. Trade Union Machinery

The allegation that the real purpose for the establishment of the E.R.P. trade union machinery was to prepare a basis for a new international trade union movement in opposition to the W.F.T.U. is completely groundless. This was made absolutely clear at the first E.R.P. Trade Union Conference. It was then expressly stated that the sole purpose of the Conference was to deal with matters relating to the European Recovery Programme. That undertaking has been faithfully observed, and despite recent events inside the W.F.T.U. there is still no intention of using the E.R.P. trade union machinery as a rival international trade union body.

Provocation and Manoeuvres

Since the brutal and cynically hostile attitude of Communism towards European recovery, there has been a better understanding of the Communist tactics, which, with untiring persistence, have consisted in exciting the economically-backward peoples, and, in particular, the colonial peoples, to rise in revolt against the Western democracies, in order to embarrass the latter, and to facilitate the propagation of Communism.

The charge recently levelled against the Communists is justified, viz., that they are doing all in their power to thwart the economic and social restoration of the non-Communist democratic countries, because Communist ideas flourish better among peoples reduced to misery and despair.

A further example of Communist strategy inside the W.F.T.U. has only recently come to light. In 1947, at Prague, when the question of German affiliation to the Federation was under consideration, a proposal it is alleged, was made to the General Secretary of the W.F.T.U., Louis Saillant, to permit the zonal organisations to affiliate separately to the W.F.T.U., if it subsequently proved impossible to reach an agreement for the trade union unification of the whole of Germany.

Unfortunately, this alternative solution was conjured away by the Communists and the General Secretary, who wanted compulsory unification of the German Trade Union Movement through a national congress to be held without delay. In fact, neither the Executive Bureau, the Executive Committee, nor the General Council was informed about this alternative proposal for zonal affiliation. The reason is clear. The German trade unions in the Soviet zone and in Berlin were completely under Communist domination. In a national congress, they would have been numerically predominant, and would have been able to force the German trade unions of the American, British and French zones to accept their particular structure, which was characterised by an extreme centralisation and which would have permitted the Communists to control all the key positions—thus giving them a firm hold on the whole of the German trade union movement and making it serve as an instrument of Soviet policy. But the German trade unions themselves took a hand. They had no desire to put their heads in the tiger's mouth. They demanded delaying the holding of the Congress for the unification of the trade unions of all four zones until the time when the German Trade Union Movement would no longer be the prey of the totalitarianism of the Soviet zone. Since these democratic guarantees have never been assured, the Congress has not been held.

In fact, collaboration between the Western and Soviet zones came to an end. Even in Berlin, where the sole supporters of the blockade were the Communists and their fellow-travellers, the democratic "minority" saw itself obliged to break away from its Communist majority leadership and create its own organisation. Moreover, it was soon shown that the minority which had parted company with its Communist leaders in reality represented a majority, which had never had the opportunity of asserting itself under the Communist commissars.

W.F.T.U. Publications Serve Communist Ends

Non-Communist organisations have rightly criticised the General Secretary and the Official Bulletin of the W.F.T.U. for having mainly served to propagate trade union conceptions on Communist lines, to the detriment of those trade union organisations of other tendencies.

The Bulletin was principally aimed at the diffusion of Communist points of

view. The nations of the Western Hemisphere and their Governments have been presented in the Bulletins as "war-mongers" and "servile instruments of the Capitalist monopolies and trusts." Non-Communist points of view were allowed to be expressed solely to create the semblance of objectivity so that propaganda for Soviet Russia and her "people's democracies" might pass more easily under this cover. Never has a word of criticism of Soviet Russia or its leaders been tolerated.

Attempt to Restore Goodwill

At the meeting of the Executive Committee in Rome, May, 1948, the non-Communist trade union leaders openly and frankly protested against this situation, indicating that these practices must cease once and for all, if the Communist leaders and the Secretary-General desired to save international trade union unity. Above all else, it was important to restore, with the greatest possible speed, the good faith and mutual confidence which had been profoundly shaken.

It is obvious that without unity at the top, no international organisation can be effective. It seemed incredible that people who stigmatised their colleagues as "splitters" and "enemies of the working class" were serious in their expression of desire to maintain unity with them. Moreover, they seemed to be quite unable to appreciate that, in these declarations, they stigmatised the Trade Union Movement in each country from which those representatives came. They knew that the point of view represented was that of the authoritative democratic machinery in those movements.

A free Trade Union Movement cannot tolerate outside interference. It will insist upon its freedom either to agree or disagree with its own Government and with any political party. Its decision must inevitably be its own.

If, in any country, the Trade Union Movement is satisfied that it must act as an instrument of its national Government or of an international political party, that is entirely a matter for that Movement to determine.

But it is clear that if those differing tendencies are to meet in any international organisation, goodwill is the first and basic essential both inside and outside the meeting room. So far as disagreements exist on policy, they must be overcome in the appropriate international machinery. No national centre should make such disagreement the subject of international propaganda which seeks to impugn the honesty, integrity and representative capacity of those with whom it disagrees.

Any one national centre attempting to interfere with the domestic policy and autonomy of another national centre is committing a fundamental breach of good faith.

This was frankly stated at the Rome meeting, where eventually an agreement was reached which raised the hope that the future of the W.F.T.U. would be preserved through tact and goodwill. Regrettably, however, subsequent events showed that no appreciable improvement was forthcoming from the Communist side.

At the Paris Executive Bureau meeting (September, 1948) it became apparent that deadlock had been reached.

The T.U.C. Proposal

Realising this, the General Council of the T.U.C. submitted a proposal, which was supported by the two other non-Communist representatives at the Executive Bureau meeting on 17-18-19 January 1949.

This proposal has been stigmatised as a villainous plot formulated on the instructions of American and British imperialism, of Wall Street monopolists and

of world reaction, with the object of undermining the Federation. This has been the propaganda line, and we say quite clearly that the people who prompted these statements do not really believe them, unless they have themselves been mesmerised by the propaganda for which they have been partly responsible.

The fact was clear to everybody in the inner councils of the World Federation that the position as it existed could not continue. The administration itself was a source of bewilderment even to the staff of the World Federation, many of whom left in despair. The deterioration of international relationships had contributed to the difficulties, the suspicions and the lack of goodwill. Three courses were open. One was to continue the organisation as a façade. Another was to wind up the organisation. The third was to suspend the present activities, to prevent any further deterioration in relationships between the national centres and to provide machinery whereby, at the first agreed opportunity, a further endeavour could be made to consider the revival of activity; in other words, to provide a period in which all concerned would appreciate that until better relationships existed between many of the national centres, international trade union unity was merely a phrase with no practical application.

The hope was that in that period, if international trade union unity was regarded as an ideal worth striving for, national centres would conduct themselves in a way which would make it possible to avoid the continuance of the recent chapter of disagreement and attacks on the free Trade Union Movements, and provide a real basis of goodwill on which an international organisation could operate.

What Was Actually Proposed

It has been stated that the proposal for suspension sought to persuade the Executive Bureau to take some unconstitutional course.

The non-Communist representatives did not ask the Executive Bureau to decide on the suspension of activities. They asked the Executive to recommend suspension to national centres.

To whom does the Federation owe its prime responsibility? Surely it is to its directly affiliated national centres, and it is to them that the movers asked that the recommendation should be made and the position clarified.

This was not a specious attempt to set aside the normal machinery of the World Federation. It was known that an Executive Bureau recommendation would carry weight with **all** national centres. No one need be misled by the raising of the bogey of "unconstitutional practice" in this matter. The free trade union movement still believes that the prime responsibility lies with affiliated organisations. It is true that the Communist-controlled national centres could, at Soviet insistence, have killed the proposal in any of the W.F.T.U. organs, but even if the contrary had been the case, the question was one of such importance that the movers and supporters of the proposal would have insisted that affiliated National Centres alone were the bodies finally to determine its acceptance or rejection. If there had been any evidence that the Executive Bureau favoured the proposal, it would have certainly been in order for the Bureau to have made a recommendation to the Executive Committee, the General Council or the Congress itself.

To have gone to a Congress without an agreed recommendation of the Executive Bureau would have made the gathering a hotbed of controversy. It is clear that whatever might have been the decision reached by that Congress, so far as those national centres who have insisted that the Federation should not be used as a sounding board for either Communist or anti-Communist propaganda, it would

not only have been an entire waste of time and money but in addition would have created untold bitterness and even greater chaos.

The "Walk-out"

It was evident that within the Executive Bureau itself, the representatives of Russia, Italy and China, with Secretary Saillant, were against the proposal, but the Chairman rightly thought that a decision should be recorded on so important a matter.

Due notice had been given of the proposal, which had been circulated to national centres; it was the only motion before the meeting. But an amendment, prepared by the Secretary, that the matter should be referred to Congress, was pressed.

The Chairman declined to accept any motion, on a matter of such importance, notice of which had not been given. He sought to take the vote, and for approximately two hours there was wrangling in regard to procedure. Points of order were raised challenging the Chairman's ruling. There are no standing orders governing procedure in meetings of the W.F.T.U., and consequently the Chairman had to take the responsibility of giving a ruling. He called for a vote, and asked for those in favour of the motion. Three representatives (the British T.U.C., the American C.I.O. and the Dutch N.V.V.) voted in favour of the proposal. He called for the vote against, but points of order continued to be raised, and the representatives against the proposal refused to register their vote.

In the circumstances, the Chairman said that he had no option but to close the meeting. It was evident that no useful purpose would be served by continuing the discussion. He therefore closed the meeting. Having recorded their vote—**an action on which they were fully mandated**—the representatives of the T.U.C., C.I.O. and N.V.V. then left.

As has been said, the proposal for suspension was an attempt to secure a breathing space in which wiser counsels could prevail. It was the final bid in the interests of international trade union unity. It has been cast aside and the old line-up of a Communist international and a free trade union international looms ahead. If that position is reached, let those who doubted the practicability or the wisdom of the proposal accept the responsibility of believing that world trade union unity can be **imposed**.

There is no longer a World Federation. The oldest and most experienced Trade Union Movements will be outside.

When within the W.F.T.U., these Movements had to contend with vilification and abuse from other affiliated bodies. Now having left, they cannot expect any cessation of this propaganda, but they have the power and the resolution to protect their way of life and their fundamental trade union beliefs.

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Appendix**THE T.U.C. AND THE W.F.T.U.**

**A Statement of Policy on The World Federation of Trade Unions by the
General Council of the Trades Union Congress
October, 1948**

FOREWORD

by **VINCENT TEWSON, C.B.E., M.C.**
(*General Secretary of the Trades Union Congress*)

THE very serious concern which has been felt by the T.U.C. General Council for a long time at developments in the World Federation of Trade Unions was expressed in the General Council's report to and the discussions at the Margate Congress, when the actions of the T.U.C. representatives on the Federation were overwhelmingly endorsed and the question of the future relationship of the T.U.C. with the World Federation of Trade Unions was left in the hands of the General Council.

The W.F.T.U. Executive Bureau meeting held in September 1948 revealed a wide measure of disagreement and the General Council have now taken the decision, which they are confident from the course of the debate at the Margate Congress will be in accord with the wishes of the British trade union movement, to propose to the World Federation of Trade Unions that in the light of the impossibility of reaching agreement on real trade union tasks:

- (1) the World Federation of Trade Unions should suspend its functions;
- (2) agreement should be sought between the organisations which have met their constitutional financial commitments as to the precise terms on which the suspension should apply;
- (3) Trustees should be appointed, consisting of one representative from each of the five main contributing National Centres qualified under the foregoing, who shall hold the accumulated funds of the World Federation and should meet in twelve months' time, or earlier, in order to discuss the conditions in which an attempt to revive an international trade union body may be made.

The General Council have further decided that in the event of the World Federation of Trade Unions refusing to agree to the suspension of its activities, a withdrawal of the T.U.C. from affiliation with the Federation must follow.

In view of its importance, the General Council have decided to circulate this decision, together with the attached memorandum, to constituent organisations for the information of their Executives.

BRIEF HISTORY

Early Stages

Originally the World Trade Union Conference was convened in London by the General Council for June 1944. Owing to the invasion of the Continent by Allied forces the Conference was postponed and eventually took place from February 6 to 17, 1945. An Administrative Committee was set up which met in the U.S.A. between April 13 and May 5, 1945, when agreement on a draft constitution was eventually reached.

The draft constitution submitted to the national centres contained (in Article 13) provisions for the establishment within the Federation of Trade Departments and for regulated activities to be undertaken by those Departments.

Conditional Support

The draft constitution recommended by the Administrative Committee was circulated to our affiliated organisations in June 1945, in order that the Executives of these bodies might consider the matter prior to Congress. Meanwhile the General Council reported that they had **provisionally endorsed the draft constitution subject to a satisfactory agreement being reached in regard to Trade Secretariats** at the forthcoming conference in Paris.

In their report to 1945 Congress the General Council indicated that they had decided on a series of proposals which should be supported by their representatives to the Paris conference and that their representatives should have discretion to present these points and to take any appropriate action in regard thereto. These proposals were embodied as eleven points which included, amongst other things:

- (a) satisfactory arrangements in regard to the carrying out of the work of the International Trade Secretariats by the Trade Departments;
- (b) Article 13, dealing with Trade Departments, should be held in abeyance pending negotiations with the existing Trade Secretariats.

The report of the General Council was submitted to and approved by the 1945 Congress.

Warning at Paris

At the Paris Conference in October 1945, the British representatives made it clear that they were deeply concerned with the structure, administration and policy aspects of the organisation if it was to function effectively. Here it is desirable to set out certain extracts from the speech made by Sir Walter Citrine representing the British Trades Union Congress:

"Taking the structure first, let us always remember that our job here is to build a Trade Union International, an International to carry on practical day to day Trade Union work, to guide the activities of our different Trade Union centres and to secure practical results for the individual members of our Unions. I say that because some of the speakers seem to be under the impression that our job is to build a Political International. I heard one speaker say yesterday that his organisation was going to join the International because his country wanted their national independence and he wished to establish Socialism. However laudable those desires may be, the World Federation of Trade Unions is not the medium whereby that is to be done. If once we get into the maze of politics, as surely as I am standing at this rostrum, this International will

perish. It will split, because the different conceptions of political aspiration, desire, method and policy are so wide that they would divide us. . . . Equally the British Trade Unions which are attached to the International through Trade Secretariats have no intention of deserting those bodies and sacrificing their staffs.

"I would say this: The British Trade Union Congress's acceptance of the constitution emanating from the work of this Conference depends upon the satisfactory outcome of the negotiations I have mentioned earlier with the International Secretariats and the International Federation of Trade Unions. Let that be clearly understood."

A meeting of the General Council of the W.F.T.U. was held during the Paris Conference on Friday, October 5, 1945. The meeting dealt with the election of the General Secretary and certain points in regard to the membership of the Executive Committee. Sir Walter Citrine, on behalf of the T.U.C. said that **the Federation was in its formative period and until they were quite sure as to what it meant in organisations, individuals, directions and in policy the T.U.C. completely reserved its right as to whether it continued membership of the Federation.** He reiterated the statement made by him at the outset of the Conference that the T.U.C. attitude towards the W.F.T.U. would depend upon the outcome of the negotiations between the I.F.T.U. and the International Trade Secretariats on the one hand and the Executive Committee of the World Federation on the other.

At every meeting of the Executive Bureau, Executive Committee or General Council, when the question of the Trade Departments has been discussed, the British representatives have never failed to make it clear that the British Trades Union Congress had approved the constitution of the W.F.T.U. on the understanding that satisfactory arrangements would be made with the International Trade Secretariats.

This brief history makes clear our views on:

- (a) the establishment of the World Federation as an industrial, as distinct from a political body; and
- (b) the necessity for satisfactory arrangements with the International Trade Secretariats as the determining factor in our attitude to the constitution of the World Federation.

T.U.C. EFFORTS

With the knowledge and experience which the T.U.C. has in matters of international Trade Union organisation, it is only natural that from the beginning British representatives should be concerned with questions of structure and function. In an endeavour to get the W.F.T.U. launched on right lines we have been the target of criticism for what have been alleged to be delaying tactics. Even at the Paris conference, before the actual formation of the W.F.T.U., this criticism had to be met.

Subsequently at Prague in June 1947, a discussion took place on the development of the work of the W.F.T.U. Here again, when we insisted that the World Federation must pay regard to its structure, administration and finance and learn to walk before it started to run, the same allegations of ill intent were levelled against us.

The General Council, prior to the Rome meetings of the World Federation, gave careful consideration to the attacks which have been made on the Trades Union Congress and its representatives on the W.F.T.U.; on the aims of the General Council in connection with the European Recovery Programme; the administration and staffing of the W.F.T.U.; the inadequacy of arrangements made for delegations which were sent to various countries and the ineffectiveness of many of the delegations which had been sent. The General Council also considered the service of Information Bulletins of the W.F.T.U. which exhibit a complete inability to avoid critical comment particularly of Great Britain and America, and at the same time a lack of critical comment of any kind on the reports coming from Eastern Europe, including the U.S.S.R. The General Council examined also the limitations and difficulties of the W.F.T.U. General Secretary.

It was as a result of this consideration that the T.U.C. representatives attended the Rome meetings in May 1948, which sought to meet some of the difficulties but could only deal with administrative matters of the Federation itself.

THE BASIC DIFFICULTIES

Contrary to our hopes fundamental difficulties lying at the root of the problem have now clearly emerged. Whilst British and other representatives have striven to get the Federation working on a sound basis, one cannot mistake the basic cleavage which presents itself. As time has gone on it has become more and more difficult to prevent the intrusion of political tactics when considering questions of Trade Union policy.

It might even still have been possible to register a measure of common agreement on many matters if confidence and good-will existed within the various executive bodies of the W.F.T.U.

That confidence and good-will, however, has been undermined by the way in which matters put forward for consideration are the subject of propaganda, if not before, then certainly after, any major questions are discussed. The stream of vilification and abuse which has been poured on the British T.U.C., American Labour and the leaders of those national centres who are not prepared to become subservient to Communist doctrine and dictation is not restrained by any desire to overcome inherent difficulties. Any realisation that international Trade Union unity depends on the good-will and good relations between the Trade Union Movements of the participating countries is completely absent in the tactics we have encountered. From all Communist-controlled national centres—and they speak with remarkable accord—propaganda is regarded either as a strategic barrage to facilitate a given line of tactics or, alternatively, to discredit any individual, movement or government which does not wholeheartedly accept the point of view of the authors.

The national centres which are subject to this vilification have had a different sense of their responsibilities to the W.F.T.U. To a great extent they have followed the example of the British Trade Union Movement in avoiding recriminations.

In our desire to avoid recriminations and to establish good-will we are faced with an obvious fact. All the propaganda and abuse of which we complain could be stopped peremptorily by the Soviets and the Cominform if they were more concerned about fostering good-will in the W.F.T.U. than with the continuance of political propaganda tactics to which it is known we are bound to object.

We have constantly found that the British and other representatives have prevented the adoption of proposals dictated solely by Communist political policy only by a flat refusal to continue discussions and by making it clear that if the political manoeuvring went on the Federation would break.

The reasons which lie behind the widespread view that the World Federation is merely an agent of Communist policy are the publications of the W.F.T.U. itself, the reports of its meetings, and the general Communist support given to certain views which have been expressed.

The latest Paris meetings of the Executive Bureau showed quite clearly that there is no possibility of agreement on major questions within the W.F.T.U. under existing circumstances. Nine out of the fifteen agenda items only were considered and—apart from a minor matter dealing with the allowances of Executive Committee members—a wide measure of disagreement was revealed. Although there was no occasion in which complete failure to agree was recorded, the form of words eventually approved in each case was evasive and merely deferred to a future meeting of the Executive Bureau any action beyond enquiry. Plans for the Second Congress of the W.F.T.U., which was to have taken place in Brussels in the month of December, were deferred. In the most favourable circumstances the Congress cannot now take place before the spring of next year.

IMMEDIATE POSITION

It is in the light of these facts that the General Council have been compelled to examine the whole question. It was obvious, in the early discussions of the draft constitution, that only a small number of affiliated Unions were at that time deeply concerned in regard to their commitments to International Trade Secretariats. Most of the Trade Secretariats had not then been resuscitated after their enforced inactivity during the war. Their revival intensifies the early concern about the fate of the International Trade Secretariats and is now on a much wider scale because it affects a far greater number of our affiliated organisations.

Failing agreement on the points of difference between the I.T.Ss. and the W.F.T.U. the Trade Secretariats have now made their position quite clear. This is evidenced by their decision in Paris which reads as follows:

“This conference of International Trade Secretariats, held in Paris on Wednesday, September 15, 1948,

“Having heard a report by their representatives on the Consultative Committee and having examined the three points submitted by the President of the W.F.T.U. on behalf of the Executive Bureau at the meeting of September 15, 1948,

“Is of the unanimous opinion that the negotiations between the International Trade Secretariats and the World Federation of Trade Unions have shown conclusively that co-operation as envisaged in the draft Regulation is impracticable.

“We declare that in the circumstances and in view of developments in the World Federation of Trade Unions during the past two years the interests of the International Trade Secretariats can best be served by continuing their independence until such time as the negotiations can be resumed with a Trade Union International that may bring

the Trade Secretariats together on a basis of autonomy acceptable to them.

"With this objective in mind the Trade Secretariats here present have resolved to establish a committee for studying the problem."

As an inevitable consequence affiliated organisations will now insist on examining their international commitments and weighing more carefully than ever the advantages which accrue from their international affiliations.

Our affiliated Unions would not count the financial cost if real international Trade Union unity was developing; but if the General Council have to answer whether the £15,000 now paid annually by organisations affiliated to the British T.U.C. is being spent profitably in pursuit of their desire for unity, the answer assuredly is "No."

The foregoing paragraphs have revealed some of the inherent difficulties and if your representatives have to admit failure it is not because of any lack of fidelity to the principles underlying the original initiative of the General Council. Failure is due to the fact that, in all the circumstances, immeasurably intensified by the gradually increasing international tension, conditions are such at the moment that they have been unable to overcome the difficulties to a degree which can justify the General Council and Congress continuing their present measure of support to the W.F.T.U.

None can feel any satisfaction in arriving at this conclusion. It is appreciated that now more than ever an international Trade Union body, which commanded confidence and respect, could play an important role. Disappointment over the failure to build the organisation which we had in mind is thus intensified

At the same time it must be emphasised that if Governments and nations could recapture that spirit of co-operation in the winning of the peace as was evidenced during the war there would be more fertile ground on which to continue our endeavours.

If we are unable to continue our present support of the W.F.T.U. there are two courses open:

- (1) To withdraw from the organisation;
- (2) To adjourn our efforts until they can be pursued in more favourable circumstances.

T.U.C. withdrawal from the Federation would undoubtedly be followed by withdrawals on the part of a considerable number of the effective national centres. If then the W.F.T.U. were to continue to function we would find it relieved of responsibility to a large number of national centres and having the adherence of national centres whose viewpoints are co-ordinated on a Communist rather than a trade union level. The organisation of a rival international would become inevitable and international rivalries would become intensified.

The idea of the World Federation was mooted at a time when the allied peoples were pursuing a common objective on a common plan. It is perhaps too much to expect that the immediate future will bring similar circumstances. But the desire of the General Council, of Congress and of our affiliated membership for international understanding between our organisations and those of other countries is such that rather than accept the first course they would prefer:

- (a) that the World Federation should suspend its functions;
- (b) that one representative from each of the five main contributing national centres be appointed as Trustees who shall hold the accumulated funds of the World Federation and meet in twelve months' time, or earlier, in order to discuss the conditions in which an attempt to revive an international Trade Union body may be made.

The precise terms under which the World Federation could be suspended would have to be worked out by agreement on the part of those organisations who have fully met their financial commitments under the constitution.

If the W.F.T.U., however, refused to agree to suspend its activities, of course our withdrawal must inevitably follow. We would then be placed in the unhappy position of seeing W.F.T.U. financial resources to which we—and other national centres—have made substantial contributions, being used for purposes which we could not approve. Under these circumstances there will be no alternative to our seeking the most effective means of combating any claims of the W.F.T.U. as a responsible and representative organisation.