

A. F. L. Rift Deepens As Convention Backs Suspension of C.I.O.

**Convention Attacks ACW for Failure to Provide
Tribute to Rickert; Turn Down Request for
Spanish Ambassador to Address Meet**

TAMPA, FLA.—After a bitter battle during which Matthew Woll injected the question of racialism, the AFL convention adopted the report of the Resolutions Committee endorsing the suspension of the 10 CIO unions.

The resolution adopted calls for (1) approval of the suspension by the council; (2) continuation of peace negotiations if the CIO should show a desire to commit suicide; and (3) to authorize the council to call an emergency convention for the purpose of expelling the CIO unions should they stick to their desire to organize the mass production industries along industrial lines.

Max Zaritsky of the Hatters led the fight for the CIO. Observers close to the council admit that the difference between continued suspension and outright expulsion is "purely technical".

By Jay Lovestone

TAMPA, FLA.—If the Fifty-Sixth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor will settle anything, it will be above all the following: The Executive Council of the A.F.L. is bankrupt; it is dead from the top down. Frey-Wharton-Green and their entire coterie are finished, in so far as their being able to respond in the least to the new moods and demands of the great mass of the American workers.

I have seen dull conventions. Sterility is nothing new to such symbols of frustration as Second Vice-President T. A. Rickert. But I do not hesitate to say that this convention marks the lowest ebb in the life of the Federation. The very atmosphere of the convention is drab. The gatherings are spiritless; its hours are instalments of routine passed thru with lifeless mechanical precision. One gets the impression that the whole show is run by a steamroller recklessly driving backward. The occasional worthwhile remarks from a guest speaker, the very infrequent attempt of some rank and file delegate from the floor to breathe some life into the congregation, the very absence of such powerful and dramatic figures as John L. Lewis and his colleagues Howard, Dubinsky and Hillman only lends more shadow to the picture of hopelessness. In the convention hall there is not a delegate representing the automobile, steel, radio workers or metal miners.

CIO ISSUE DOMINATES CONVENTION

The pall of the CIO controversy hangs over the convention. That is why there is more life in the hotel lobbies than in the meeting hall. Here there is discussion, argument, and reasoning. At the restaurant tables and in the hotel rooms rumor is dished out and intrigue abounds. Without fear of challenge, we assert that Wharton and Frey have even been raising (in private conversations) a smoke screen of anti-Semitism.

Yet, I am convinced that the CIO leaders should have come here. They should have come not because there was a chance of their getting a majority of the votes. Here the decks are stacked. But they should have come for the purpose of dramatizing their struggle for industrial unionism more effectively, for the purpose of giving some generalship and lending some organization to the many worthwhile forces in the ranks of the delegates representing state federations, city central bodies, and federal locals. They should have come in order to take away from the Wolls and Greens an argument which they have been using with some effect among many delegates. It is the argument that they are reasonable men who want to talk it over and who want peace and unity but that Lewis won't even accord them an interview.

Of course, this whole plea of Green and his aides that they want to talk it over and that they want unity is just that much sheer hypocrisy. When Woll and Wharton and Frey seek to parade as innocent lambs without evil intentions and with nobility of purpose dripping from every pore, they play the role of unvarnished prevaricators. Whatever criticism one may attach to some of the tactical moves made by Lewis in particular and the CIO in general, it must be said that: (1) these errors in strategy, pale into insignificance when placed beside the importance of the fundamental nature of the issue involved and (2) the Executive Council in all its actions has not shown the least desire for a constructive settlement of the issue at stake.

To a large number of delegates it is clear that the Executive Council, in suspending the CIO unions, acted in a high-handed, disruptive manner, in utter violation of the letter and spirit of the AFL constitution, organization practices and precedents. Many delegates here have not forgotten that the CIO and Lewis himself have unhesitatingly agreed to confer and to seek a settlement provided that the illegal suspension is first of all lifted. But the Council majority is

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adamant in one thing and one purpose: in its refusal to lift the suspensions as a prerequisite for negotiations. In this refusal Green and Co. are revealing their despair of today and their doom of tomorrow. They are symbols of an epoch in the labor movement which is about to end; they are obstacles to an epoch in the labor movement that is being ushered in. In the latter capacity they can and will do much damage to the best interests of the trade union and general labor movements. In this respect only, would it be folly to write them off.

GREEN'S POLICY--ONE OF DESPAIR

Let's look into this matter a bit further. I put to Green point blank the following leading question: "What likelihood is there that the Convention will invite Lewis to address the delegates so that they may be better informed and better able to make an intelligent decision on the CIO controversy"? President Green replied: "Lewis will never accept. That's out of the question." And when a newspaper man followed with another query: "What about the move that is being made by important delegates here to have Lewis invited"? Green could think of no better reply than: "I have not heard of any such move." It was evident to all of us at this interview that Green was hedging and dodging the question of Lewis being invited to address the convention as a speaker and not as a defendant or delegate sentenced to expulsion or its equivalent—permanent suspension. This incident reveals beyond a shadow of a doubt the transparency of the tissue of claims for unity and "talking-it-over" made by the Executive Council in its own behalf. It was clear to all of us that Green did not want Lewis to address the convention in this role.

But despite all the noise and bombast, despite all the pinpricking proposals, despite all the threats of Wharton and Frey, in spite of the latter's resolution for the expulsion of the CIO unions, there is extremely little likelihood that Woll's resolutions committee will dare propose outright expulsion. When I say dare, I do not desire to give anyone the impression that the reason for this probable failure to recommend expulsion is the danger of its being rejected. With the biggest and liveliest unions not represented here, Green and his partners-in-destruction could get anything passed here. In reality, the Executive Council does not dare have the resolutions committee propose open, outright frank expulsion. It is planning to resort to a subterfuge but nevertheless

equivalent recommendation because it, better than anyone else, knows its own weak foundation, its own bankruptcy.

Alongside of the Republican National Committee, there is no more paralyzed and backward-looking outfit than the A. F. of L. Council. Its liveliest members are alive precisely to the extent that they are aware of the fact that the best men, the best brains and the most cash are in the unions today lined up with the CIO. Even Wharton is aware of the fact that not even the decision of the convention to boycott the Amalgamated Clothing Workers label and to give the United Garment Workers a monopoly of the label could bring Rickert back from dissipation and futility to inspiration and utility.

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Suspension To Be Approved

At this writing it appears certain that the resolutions committee will recommend and that the convention will adopt the following "solution" for the CIO question: (1) To indorse the action of the Council in suspending the CIO unions; (2) to empower the incoming Council to continue to handle this question in an effort, of course, to re-establish harmony

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cry—woe is me! What purposes will it serve, except those of demoralization and disgust?

We must ask the question—is it possible, is it probable that the present struggle over industrial unionism as the form for the organization of the mass production industries, can be solved peacefully by means of some extremely clever and hitherto overlooked compromise proposal? The answer to that is—not a chance! Even so well informed a person as Chester Wright now admits that there is not the slightest basis for any such illusion. He goes further. He insists, and properly so, that even if the “moderates” (pardon the term) should win out and the 10 CIO unions be “suspended only”, the difference between that and outright expulsion would be “purely technical.” In other words the split is an accomplished fact even if the so-called moderates in the A. F. of L. win out.

Now the extremely clever critic will say—Sure, I understand all that, that's perfectly correct, but we must not come out weeks before and say what you say. We must be diplomatic, we must talk

made her usual speech but for the sacrifice of some of her very stale and all too oft-repeated “jokes.” By the time the fourth day got around, Third Vice-president Matthew Woll, chairman of the resolutions committee, presented a resolution denouncing the strike of the seamen. This strikebreaking proposals was steamrollered as policy-decision number one of the convention over the poorly organized protest of the inexperienced left forces occupying delegates' seats. Flushed with victory, Woll retired to further labors of a similar sort in the resolutions committee plagued with the CIO problem.

Spencer Miller, head of the Workers Education Bureau, brought the first sign of life to the convention by his eloquent and effective plea in behalf of solidarity with the fighters against fascism in Spain. When he was thru, Green did not even render him the thanks customarily given to guest speakers. This conduct on the part of Green was fully in line with his adamant refusal to allow Isabel Palencia, member of the Spanish parliament, to address delegates in behalf of the heroic battlers against Fascist reaction in Spain. The heavy and brutal hand of the Catholic oligarchy, of the Vatican pack, rests firmly on the dominant officialdom at the top of the AFL.

The fifth day opened with greetings from the British fraternal delegates. Delegate Gibson brought greetings from across the sea, pleaded for international solidarity in the struggle against Fascism,

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and unity; (3) to give the Council full power to act in any way it sees fit (expulsions not excluded, theoretically) to bring the controversy to a speedy conclusion.

This strategy is animated by the following objectives: First of all, the previous conduct of the Council in suspending is thus legalized; secondly, it will enable the incoming Council, which will be at least as reactionary as its predecessor, to continue maneuvering with a view of dividing the ranks of the CIO by taking away the ILGWU which is a special target of the Woll-Green leadership; thirdly, it will help hold in line and solidify its own forces in the ranks of which there is strong opposition to expulsions; fourthly, it will aid them in their game of shifting the onus of responsibility, the burden of the blame for the break on to the backs of the leaders of the CIO, thus shrouding themselves in a cloak of the angel of unity.

But everything that has happened so far at this convention as well as all that has not happened but should have happened condemns the dominant leadership here as unworthy of having the confidence of the trade unions' membership. In fact, the only progressive ideas that came off the platform, so far, have come from guest speakers: now and then from a representative of a government department. Fraternal delegate Gibson from Great Britain again established the British Trade Unions as the respected though respectable left wing of the convention.

“Democracy” Issue—Again

Thus, on behalf of the Central Trades and Labor Assembly of Tampa, its president W. E. Sullivan assured the delegates that they “will discover that the majority of the business men of Tampa are friendly to organized labor...” and that “the majority of those who employ labor extend to you a friendly, sincere welcome.” And this in a haven of kidnappers and floggers of labor organizers, in a town that has not yet thought it necessary even to bring to trial the murderers of Shoemaker, in a nest of reaction that would not allow Browder to make a fervent plea even for present-day American (capitalist) democracy! Small wonder that the Mayor had the insolence to send as his representative to the convention none other than the City Attorney. Yet, this

very unsavory opening of the convention had an element of justice and truth in it, as indicated in the confession of the third greeter, E. P. Taliaferro, President, Tampa Chamber of Commerce, whose very first utterance was: “I fear that the City Attorney has made the speech for the Chamber of Commerce and that I should make the City Attorney's speech.”

U. S. Senator Pepper then told the delegates how glad he was that he was able to address “the men and women of America who are privileged to earn their daily bread.” He assured them that he loved the “liberal traditions” and that as Senator from Florida he knew that the Washington Administration “has given the national government a heart” and that “We know now there is a conscience in the heart of this nation.”

Green soon followed with a few remarks about the convention being “privileged to meet in this very hospitable community.” In a burst of forced high-pressure emotionalism he raved against “men and women moved by consuming personal ambitions” and cried for “unity, solidarity, concord, co-operation . . . the faith of the pioneers . . . the Ark of the Covenant of the A. F. of L.” He denied that “the issue is industrial versus craft unions.” He thundered: “We are willing to apply both forms of organization in accordance with circumstances and conditions and in accordance with the best judgment of the executive officers of the A. F. of L. and of its conventions.” Green stressed: “My friends, we have been functioning for fifty-six years. Why is it that that issue did not split us assunder twenty years ago? . . . The real issue is democracy within the A. F. of L. shall the will of a convention, freely expressed, be the law of the A. F. of L.? . . . There is the issue—democracy.”

Frey raised the communist issue no sooner than the credentials committee reported. This time he had wrong even the elementary facts of the case, let alone the point of view. Here Frey merely showed how desperate he and his friends are.

A.C.W. Under Fire

Congressman Meade of Buffalo struck a few sound notes in behalf of social legislation. For Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins the audience was augmented by having the “hospitable city” lend some students for the occasion in the gallery. This “distinguished guest”

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and even mentioned Karl Marx by name. Canadian fraternal delegate Brunet followed. Green replied with an oratorical outburst against fascism and "all forms of dictatorship." It was a plea replete with vague generalizations, glittering generalities, and confusion—including some leech used for "that great race, the Jews." Here was a soap, an antihistamine, and an insecticide—all rolled into one.

In the address of Edwin S. Smith, member of the National Labor Relations Board, there was some sound advice coupled with timely warnings to labor to be on guard against the open-shoppers seeking, by sundry means, to rob labor of the right to organize.

The resolution of the Committee on the Executive Council report was then adopted except for the section dealing with the CIO—item by item with great dispatch under the tutelage of president Green and reporter Wharton. In the course of this session there came up the twenty-one year old Lithographer's controversy and the petty move against the amalgamated Clothing Workers. Max Zaritsky could not embarrass Ricker with the unpleasant query whether the United was "well enough organized to enable AFL members to use clothes with their label." Nor could even Marshal with his warning that such a decision might mean that "AFL delegates would have to come to conventions in overalls instead of custom-made clothes . . ."