

Organizing the Young Workers

By HERBERT ZAM

(Continued From Previous Issue.)

The second case was that of the millinery workers. The millinery workers after about two years of hard work had succeeded in building up a local of almost 4,000 members. No help had been given by the bureaucrats in this work, and they themselves previously had never taken any interest in organizing the trimmers.

After this work was accomplished however, they are now making efforts to smash the millinery workers' union under the fake slogans of amalgamation and endeavoring to combine it with another local. The third case was that of the office workers. The Office Workers' Union, the B. S. & A. U., No. 12646, a federal union of the American Federation of Labor, has been in existence for many many years, but in all that time has not yet succeeded in getting at the most more than 10 or 150 members into its ranks. It has had annual expulsions every year. Young workers in the office workers' union who have really shown any interest in organizing the big mass of the office workers were inevitably expelled from the union, as has been the case recently.

Finally, however, those who were expelled decided that they could no longer support an organization like the office workers' union which makes no effort to organize the young workers, which makes no effort to fight for their conditions, but on the contrary, expels those who wish to fight for their conditions.

They organized the Office Work-

ers' League which is rapidly gaining in membership.

Shoe Workers.

The fourth case was that of the shoe workers. The slipper workers, mostly young workers, had heretofore been unorganized. Recently they were organized in a local and as a result of this they gained many concessions from the boss. However, the bureaucrats of the Shoe Workers' Protective Union were not interested in seeing the young workers in the trade organized. Consequently they took out an injunction against the Shoe Workers' Union which had organized the young workers. All these examples very definitely indicated that the part of the trade union bureaucracy is not only away from organizing the young workers, but is actually for preventing the organization of the young workers by themselves or by other forces, and for smashing their organizations wherever they succeed in forming them.

Role of Brookwood.

In this situation, what is the role of Muste and his associates of the Brookwood Labor College? Their role is somewhat similar to that of the left social democrats in Europe. They talk about organizing the young workers, because there is a movement in the ranks of the young workers for organization. But their talk is only intended to side-track the young workers from organization. They are just as much interested in organizing the young workers as is the trade union bureaucracy. This was demonstrated at the conference by their continual abhorrence of the discussion of the concrete questions, such as the Plumbers' Helpers' and the Millinery

Workers' Unions. They were much more interested in discussing organizing the young workers as an abstraction, but refused to discuss any concrete situation. This was also indicated by their refusal to take any steps which might have a positive result in the labor movement. Tom Tippet in his speech had declared that the First Brookwood Conference was a conference of hot air; this one would be one of action. But Mr. Muste very quickly disillusioned the delegates. He declared that the conference could do nothing; the conference could only discuss.

When the delegates, however, objected very strenuously to such declarations, he was compelled to withdraw and finally under the pressure of the delegates he even made the concession of permitting the adoption of resolutions, with the result that the resolution introduced by the representative of the Young Workers League on Social Legislation for the Young Workers, and the resolution introduced by Clarence Miller on the organization of the young workers, were unanimously adopted. There was also quite a vigorous struggle over the question of whether the conference should elect a committee or not. Mr. Muste was against it. The delegates were for it. The delegates declared that they must elect a committee which would be able to carry out some of the decisions of the conference, which would be able to reach other trade unions with the message of the conference. And finally again, Mr. Muste was compelled to accede to the wishes of the delegates and a committee was elected.

The conference demonstrated one

thing very clearly. The young workers are an important factor. They must be organized. Without the young workers, the struggle of the workers against the capitalist class is so much the harder. To whom will fall the task of organizing the young workers? To the Communists and the left wing. No other force can or will organize the young workers. The trade union bureaucrats will do all in their power to prevent the organization of the young workers. The liberals, like Muste, in between, will talk about organizing the young workers, but actually will act as a brake on this movement. The Communists and the left wing must be the ones to take the concrete measures for organizing the young workers. The Young Workers (Communist) League has for the past three years been in the forefront in this task. This still remains a fundamental task for the Young Workers (Communist) League. The Young Workers (Communist) League looks upon the Labor Youth Conference as a step of progress, not because of the achievements of Brookwood, but because of the achievements of the delegates themselves against them. What must be done now is to follow up, to actually carry out what the delegates expressed at the Labor Youth Conference at Brookwood and to spread this on a national scale.

The role of Brookwood at this conference was clear. His role was to rationalize and justify the betrayals of the bureaucracy and their attacks against the left wing and Communists. At times this betrayal was cleverly marked by the proper phraseology.