

THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

The Coming Pacific Trade Union Congress.

By A. Lozovsky.

On the 15th of August this Congress is to meet in Vladivostok where it will summarise the results of the two years activities of the Pacific Secretariat which was set up in Hankow at the Conference held there towards the end of May 1927.

During these two years big events have taken place on the shores of the Pacific. When the Pacific Conference opened in Hankow on May 20th, the Chinese Revolution was still moving forward. It is true that there were already serious symptoms of an onrushing counter-revolution, and the treachery of the Left-Wing Kuomintang was clearly taking shape, but at the time in question the "national-revolutionary" Government was still in existence in Hankow and screening its counter-revolutionary preparations under a froth of revolutionary phraseology. Within a month after the Hankow Conference the "national-revolutionary" Government revealed its true counter-revolutionary features. There began a period of bitter persecution against the labour-peasant movement throughout the length and breadth of China, a time of mass executions and the shooting of the finest fighters the working class has ever produced. This was followed by a number of revolts of which the most important was the Canton uprising. These insurrections were crushed and, along with the imperialists, the Chinese militarists regained their old position.

Deep underground they drove the labour movement. But as soon as the revolutionary movement of the workers and peasants was broken up the united front of the militarists at once collapsed, and in China to-day a fierce civil war is raging, the different military groupings having the backing of the various imperialist powers (Great Britain, the United States and Japan).

These two years have been years of bitter experiences for China's working class movement. In spite of the physical extermination of tens of thousands of workers and peasants, the revolutionary movement is not dying down. It keeps breaking out, now here, now there. The trade unions continue to exist and fight from underground, and the Communist Party has not laid its weapons aside, but is carrying on with its great work of organising the masses for the struggles that lie ahead of them. But if it seemed in the middle of 1927 that it was only a matter of months ere a new wave of revolution would rise, to-day we are bound to recognise that at that time we underestimated the extent of the defeat suffered. The worker and peasant masses were weakened by the brutal blood-bath, and the help given by the United States and the other imperialists enabled the Chinese militarists and bourgeoisie to consolidate their victory for the time being.

This break up of the Chinese labour movement could not fail to hit the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat, as well, seeing that the Secretariat, working in China, was compelled owing to this reaction to act in underground conditions and was not in the position to carry out to the full, as far as China was concerned, those tasks laid upon it by the Conference.

Yet in spite of the tremendous difficulties it had to face the Pacific Secretariat has rendered yeoman service to the Chinese trade union movement by fighting both against the "Putschism" of adventurists and Right-Wing deviations, by disentangling and straightening the policy to be followed and rallying round the banner of the revolutionary class struggle all the genuinely revolutionary and class-conscious elements of the Chinese trade union movement.

As in China, so in Japan the labour movement has seen stormy times during these two years. The Japanese bourgeoisie have begun to apply purely Chinese methods to the labour movement: murdering leaders, breaking up organisations, and introducing terrorism in their system of administration. The dissolution of the Hiogikai, the break up of various trade unions, and the arrests and murders of a large number of leaders have not given the results expected. In Japan to-day the class struggle is getting steadily more acute. Dispute after dispute comes along and strike follows strike. The labour movement is growing, and the will too of the workers to fight is growing, as is, too, their urge to unite their forces.

Despite the refined methods used for crushing the labour movement, methods which are a combination of reformist corruption and police provocation, shooting of working class fighters from behind and open terrorism, the revolutionary wing of the labour movement has not been crushed entirely, and the working class of Japan is taking counter-action in reply to the onslaught of the bourgeoisie. Many of the strikes called by the workers have been of a most stubborn character. Japan's working class movement is smashing down the barriers of the reaction, and, in spite of tremendous difficulties, is moving out on the broad road of consistent class struggle. The most welcome feature in this fight of theirs is that, despite all terrorism, the revolutionary wing of the movement in Japan has never for one minute broken off its connections with the Pacific Secretariat, which is to be ascribed to the great services the Secretariat has extended to the Japanese movement by doing everything to help the Left wing to carry on its uphill struggle against the Japanese reformists and capitalists.

Nor have the Secretariat's activities been confined to these two countries: In the Philippines, too, the labour movement has grown in stature and developed both in regard to outlook and organisation during the two years under review. As is common knowledge, the labour movement of the Philippines was first drawn into the international movement through the Pan-Pacific Secretariat. Until the Secretariat came into being no one was aware that any trade union movement existed in the Philippines or knew of the conditions in which the proletariat of these islands had to live and fight. The formation of the Pan-Pacific Secretariat evoked a warm response among the Filipino workers, and, save for few exceptions, among all the unions as well, besides a number of peasant organisations. Many of these bodies have affiliated to the Pan-Pacific Secretariat, thus breaking down the handicap of their previous national insularity.

In the coming Pacific war the Philippines will be the apple of discord for which the Powers are going to fight. Japan has long had its eye on the Philippines which have become the rear base of the United States. In the struggle between the imperialist giants the labour movement of the Philippines can occupy neither a neutral position nor take its stand alongside one or the other of the warring imperialists. Together with the working class of other countries it will have to take its stand against all the imperialist Powers. The working classes of the Philippines are beginning to realise, that anti-imperialist tactics on their part would be impossible if their labour movement is to be isolated from the International and fit to a narrow insularity. For this reason the affiliation of the trade unions of the Philippines to the Pan-Pacific Secretariat is the best surety the labour movement of the islands has against the possible exploitation of its workers as cannon fodder for American or Japanese imperialism.

Connections between the labour movement of the Philippines and the Pan-Pacific Secretariat have always been very close indeed, and many of the political and organisational directives given by the Secretariat to Filipino comrades have brought for the most gratifying results as regards the growth and development of the labour movement in the islands.

Big work has been done during this period by the Pan-Pacific Secretariat in Australia where the labour movement has always been aloof from the world labour movement. As a Dominion Australia herself possesses her own colonies, and as the Australian bourgeoisie are closely bound up with the bourgeoisie of the "Mother Country", they are still supporting Britain's claims to world rule. On the other hand, the Australian bourgeoisie realise perfectly that if the United States and Britain come to grips the Island Continent will be powerless to defend herself and her colonies against the U.S. navy. The Australian bourgeoisie, then, are manoeuvring, and there exists a possibility that in the event of an Anglo-American War Australia will proclaim her "neutrality".

Developing for decades far from the labour movement of other countries, the Australian Labour movement possesses some peculiar features of its own. Of these the most important is the hatred of the Australian workers for the coloured workers that they have given evidence of for years back. The chauvinism of white supremacy is a widespread sickness among the Australian workers. One big thing the Pan-Pacific Secretariat has done has been to declare unrelenting war on this "All-White Australianism" and that it has founded in Sydney "The Pacific

Worker" which right from its first appearance has consistently and insistently fought this brand of chauvinism, national insularity, racial prejudices, its "home-made" reformism and the superiority attitude of the Anglo-Saxons towards the coloured races.

"The Pacific Worker" has rendered great services both to the Australian and the world labour movement by the very fact that it is the first paper in the Australian trade union movement which has raised the entire question of the revolutionary class struggle and all other issues effecting the movement in their broadest aspect; it has been the first to bring Australian questions out on to the international arena, and, on the other hand, to bring international issues to the immediate notice of the Australian workers. Under the blows of "The Pacific Worker's" biting criticism all the reactionary elements of the country have joined forces, but this has also brought about the unification of all progressive elements in the Australian labour movement. There is no gainsaying the fact that by helping to draw this clear political line within the working class movement the Pan-Pacific Secretariat and "The Pacific Worker" it is publishing from Sydney have rendered a service that time will never discount.

Extensive connections during this period have been formed between the Pan-Pacific Secretariat and the labour movement of Formosa, Singapore, as well as all the Latin-American countries with Pacific seaboard. This is a matter of prime importance, since connections between Mexico, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Chile, and the labour movement of the rest of the Pacific is of the most outstanding political significance. Firstly, these connections tighten up the united front of the Pacific labour movement generally; secondly, through these countries the Pan-Pacific Secretariat finds itself organically linked up with the Latin-American Trade Union Confederation; and the united front of these two bodies is going to prove of the most tremendous importance for the further development of the revolutionary trade union movement throughout the world.

Of great importance also are the connections the Secretariat has formed with the left wing of the labour movement of the United States, Canada, Great Britain and France. To tighten connections between the Secretariat, the United States and Canada the Secretariat has transferred the publishing headquarters of its organ "The Pan-Pacific Monthly" to San Francisco. The first numbers have already appeared so that both the North American and Latin-American seaboard of the Pacific are linked up ideologically and organisationally with the Pan-Pacific Secretariat, which will make the forthcoming Vladivostok Congress of all the greater importance.

Less prominent during this period have been British India and the Dutch Indies. After the insurrection in Java the labour movement of Indonesia was driven underground, and owing to the terror and police persecutions still raging in the Archipelago the Indonesian trade unions have still weak contact with the Pan-Pacific Secretariat, although they were among the trade union bodies responsible for first lining up the workers throughout the whole of the Pacific.

As regards India, there is a head forward movement in that country which plainly shows that a revolutionary crisis is rushing down on that land. The combined forces of the Anglo-Indian reaction cannot smash the labour movement. Arrests and shootings will prove of no avail either, any more than the missionaries of the General Council and the British Labour Party. India's labour movement is shaking off the effects of nationalist dogma and reformist influence. Although India already possesses really representative left-wing organisations prepared to affiliate to the Pan-Pacific Secretariat, it has been impossible so far to establish organic connections between them and the Secretariat owing to the first-class working methods of the Anglo-Indian Government's police and spy service. This does not mean, however, that no connections exist — they are there, but are still rather weak, although it is precisely the working class movement of India that will be called upon within the next few years to take practically the dominant part in the country's struggle for independence and in the long fight of the international proletariat against imperialism. Connections are weak, but there is no doubt that they will be strengthened and that the united front of the workers throughout the Pacific will be still further reinforced.

Laborious indeed has been the work of the Pan-Pacific Secretariat, and very hard, too, have been the conditions under

which it has worked. Owing to the wild reaction sweeping China there could be no thought even of calling the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Congress there. Attempts to convene the Congress in Australia also failed, as the Australian Government was strongly opposed to any such thing. After these fruitless efforts the Central Council of Trade Unions of the Soviet Union suggested to the Pan-Pacific Secretariat that the Congress could meet in Vladivostok. The Secretariat accepted the offer, and its Congress will meet on the 15th of August on the territory of the Soviet Union.

The fact that the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat could not find a place to meet in congress legally is characteristic of present-day bourgeois democracy. Australia is considered an "advanced" democracy, but the very idea of the Congress meeting there roused the bourgeoisie as well as the leaders of the Australian Labour Party to frothy fury. Where then was the Congress to be held? In China, Japan, the Philippines, India, Indonesia, Formosa, Singapore, the United States or Great Britain? All these places were plainly out of the question. The only place where the delegates could meet in full freedom without police interference and hammer out the problems confronting the Pacific labour movement was Vladivostok. The C.C.T.U. was one of the initiators taking part in the constituent conference of the Pan-Pacific Secretariat, and it was but natural that the Trade Unions of the Soviet Union should offer hospitality to the Secretariat. Its congress, then, will meet on Soviet soil and freely discuss the problems facing the labour movement of the Pacific.

As will be understood, the agenda the Pacific Congress will have to discuss will be fairly big. It will include the problem of fighting imperialist war, the question of the national-liberation movement, emigration and immigration, female and child labour, matters of organisation, the question of culture and trade union education, a programme of action, and so on, and so forth. Considering the racial, national and cultural differences to be found on the shores of the Pacific, it is hardly to be wondered at that the Congress will have to tackle such a big agenda. There are three outstanding problems of paramount importance for the labour movement of the Pacific. They are: 1. the fighting of all war; 2. the combatting of racial prejudices and antagonisms artificially fostered between one race and another; and 3. the struggle for the open existence of the left trade unions. All three problems will be considered in detail by the Congress.

As far back as the Hankow Conference in 1927 a programme of action was drawn up which included the demand for "equal pay for equal work" irrespective of race or sex. These questions will also have to be gone into by the Vladivostok Congress. The differences in the life standards of the Pacific workers are enormous. Australian workers, for instance, get fifteen to twenty times more than the Chinese workers. Now, since industry is rapidly developing in the orient and the latest modern machinery is being combined with what is practically slave-labour, differences like these are bound to constitute a very real threat indeed to the standard of life of the workers in the old capitalist countries. The proletariat's life standards have a constant tendency to seek one level, and unless we are able, by a stubborn and systematic fight, to lift the life standards of the workers of the colonies and semi-colonies, they will inevitably pull down the standard of living of the workers in the advanced capitalist countries. Axiomatic though this statement is, it is not yet thoroughly grasped by the workers of the capitalist countries.

Not only representatives of the colonial and semi-colonial countries and of those capitalist countries possessing colonies in the Pacific, but also the representatives of the Trade Unions of the Soviet Union will assemble at the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Congress. The Congress will thus afford one further opportunity to the representatives of the victorious proletariat of the Soviet Union and the workers of the capitalist, colonial and semi-colonial countries to meet and fraternize.

The coming Vladivostok Congress is of the greatest importance, furthermore, from the viewpoint of the unification of all forces of the world labour movement in the struggle against imperialism. Time was when the labour movement of Europe was the centre for the whole world. Outside Europe there were no working class organisations. But that time has gone for good. The rise in itself of the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat bears witness to the fact that in many of the newer countries real working class organisations have taken shape

and grown in stature. The Latin-American Trade Union Congress proved that the overwhelming majority of the trade unions of Latin-America stand on the class position.

If Amsterdam still keeps assuring us that it is the only International in existence, this is merely further proof of the big-headedness of the I.F.T.U. leaders and of their refusal to look facts in the face. After the formation of the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat and the rise of the Latin-American Trade Union Confederation, both of which maintain fraternal relations with the R. I. L. U., the Amsterdam International would do better to change its title in accordance with the essence of its organisation and in keeping with its actual numerical strength. The Amsterdam International caters for part of the trade union movement of the European Continent, and it ought to call itself a semi-continental International; though, after the effecting thereby, and the R. I. L. U., the Pan-Pacific Secretariat and the Latin-American Trade Union Confederation will be responsible for organising the majority of the organised workers the world round. These are the facts of the position and "facts are chieftains that winna ding".

True, the I.F.T.U. has had its "successes" to record during the two years of the movement's history we are now considering. Italy has been visited by the President and Secretary of the Amsterdam International and negotiations conducted with those two social-fascists D'Aragona and Rigola with a view to preparing the ground for co-operation with the fascist trade union corporation. Line up by all means, ye Amsterdamers and Fascists! Joining forces will not make you any stronger. For us, we will build up a united front of the revolutionary workers throughout the world; we will unite in brotherly bonds the workers of the R. I. L. U., the Pan-Pacific Secretariat and the Latin-American Trade Union Confederation, and shoulder to shoulder, fight against Imperialism, against Fascism and against their reformist lickspittles.

British Miners and the Labour Government.

By W. Holmes (London).

It is generally agreed that the most thorny domestic problem facing the MacDonal Government is the mining situation. Not only do the district wage agreements concluded after the great lock-out of 1926 terminate this year in the principal coalfields of the country; but the miners are also looking for early fulfilment of what they firmly believe to have been the election pledge of the Labour Party to repeal the Baldwin's Government Eight-Hour Day Act and to introduce the seven-hour day. Actually the Labour Party did not give any specific election pledge to re-introduce the seven-hour day. It spoke vaguely of shortening miners hours and left it significantly at that. All the same it is true that the vast mass of the miners, who voted to a man for the Labour Party, firmly believe that such a pledge was given.

The feelings of the miners themselves are reflected in the resolutions which the various district Unions are proposing at the Annual Conference of the Miners Federation which meets in Blackpool in July. These resolutions demand a national wage agreement (in place of the present district agreements) with a guaranteed individual minimum wage; the securing of a higher standard of life for the miners: the repeal of the Eight-Hour Act and the re-introduction of the seven-hour day; the repeal of the Baldwin's Government anti-trade Union act of 1927, and the early introduction of a bill for the nationalisation of the mines.

On the question of a national wage agreement the coal-owners, speaking through their president Mr. Evan Williams, have already made it clear that under no circumstances will they consider even entering into negotiations for such an agreement. And here the Labour Party and the Miners' Federation leadership, speaking through their respective official organs, the "Miner" and the "Daily Herald" write in expressing the "hope" that the coal-owners will at last admit the unwisdom of District agreements.

Undoubtedly it is also in the futile "hope" of "persuading" the recalcitrant coal-owners — side by side with that "persuading"