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LABOR IN WAR  
by  
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## LABOR IN WAR

I presume that this is the only country in the world where civilians who are tradesmen and officials are given the opportunity of addressing a group of commissioned officers. I think it is the most fortunate condition, and I hope that as the years pass by there will be even a more definite liaison between the national trade union movement in our country and those in charge of our national defense.

I have had the privilege on several occasions of talking to The Army Industrial College, and the most pleasing part of the opportunity has always been the questions which are asked. This morning I feel that I may be of much more service to you in giving you the opportunity of answering questions than I can be in any other way because I may discuss questions which interest me and which I think are important but that have no particular appeal to you while you, without a doubt, will have questions in your mind of a most practical nature which have to do with the work that you perform as officers.

Perhaps it might be well just in the opening remarks to tell you what the American Federation of Labor is. You know of it as the great national labor organization of our country. It is a very democratic and loosely formed federation. It is composed of the international unions, some one hundred and twenty, each of whom has as complete autonomy over its internal affairs as the state of Maryland has complete autonomy over what it does within the state, and the other states in a similar manner

These international unions federate together in the American Federation of Labor so that they will be able to work out general programs and policies and decide what legislation they desire to have enacted or to have repealed, so that on general questions the federated strength of all of these international unions can be combined.

The American Federation of Labor does have a number of internal federations for practical purposes. They are divided much as the War Department is in different branches of the service. The Metal Trades Department consists of all of the international unions in the American Federation of Labor whose members work in metal manufacturing. The Building and Construction Trades Department consists of all of the international unions whose members work in the building trades. The Railway Employes

Department consists of all of the international unions whose members are employed on railroads. It happens that many of the international unions are affiliated with each of the three departments. For instance, there is the boilermaker. The boilermakers are in the Metal Trades Department because of their interest in the manufacturing field. They are in the Railway Employes Department because their members repair the boilers on locomotives and do other boiler work. They are in the Building Trades because some of their work is done in connection with the construction and repair in building. Each of these departments has absolute autonomy over its internal affairs. The American Federation of Labor would never attempt to step into any of the departments with instructions relative to their internal affairs.

These departments hold their conventions prior to the conventions of the American Federation of Labor in the same city, and the constitution provides their headquarters must be in the same building as the American Federation of Labor. When we meet in our conventions we discuss general policy as well as detailed problems and then all move into the convention of the American Federation of Labor for the purpose of securing approval of the policies which we think are wise for ourselves.

There is no confusion in that kind of an organization, but it is a closely knit democratic organization and the American Federation of Labor has no authority except the authority of a decision reached by the majority. Its authority is not in issuing orders or is not in applying discipline so much as it is in adopting policies and programs and doing that in a way which wins the support of the membership. We discovered many, many years ago that we can adopt what seems to us to be the best possible policy in connection with a certain question and it is nil unless the membership believes in it, and so we must conduct all of our activities in a manner which will win the support of the membership if we adopt a policy which doesn't work, instead of endeavoring to apply too much discipline we must look around to see why this policy which we believe in has failed to work successfully, and change it so that it will meet approval of the membership.

I can give you one illustration outside of the movement. Many wellmeaning people believed that the national menace was the consumption of **alcoholic** beverages and they worked up a strong public opinion. The result was the enactment of the Eighteenth Amendment, and after we had the Eighteenth Amendment

apparently it didn't work. I lived through that period and I know that my contacts were in evidence that it was not in operation. Then these well-meaning people had to admit after a while that it didn't work, and so we repealed the Eighteenth Amendment.

As under the Eighteenth Amendment it was found impossible to enforce even a portion of the Constitution when too many people were opposed to it, so in our trade union movement we cannot enforce any decision of ours unless behind us is a healthy, wide-awake majority in favor of the program.

The local unions of all of these internationals owe their first allegiance to their own organization, not to the American Federation of Labor but to their own international union. They look to their international union, and whatever discipline is enforced is not enforced by the American Federation of Labor but by their own organization. They in turn are divided into central labor councils so that there is a central labor body in each city where the members of these local unions or their delegates get together once a week or twice a month, for the purpose of passing on local questions which affect the movement as a whole. These in turn are federated in every state into what are called State Federations of Labor. Their purpose is very largely legislative, to endeavor to secure through the legislature the measures which the organized workmen in the state desire, but that is not the end of organization.

In the Building Trades in every city there is a Building Trades Council. The delegates to the Building Trades Council are quite likely to be the local union's delegate of the central labor body so that they keep informed on what both are doing. Then in most of the cities there is also a local Metal Trades Council, and the purpose of that Council, in addition to looking after matters of interest to the metal worker in the community, also endeavors to jointly negotiate agreements with employers so that instead of the draftsmen and the patternmakers, blacksmiths, boilermakers, etc., separately negotiating an agreement with one firm the Metal Trades Council, representing all of these, negotiates one agreement, then the disciplinary authority to compel observance of the agreement by all of the unions lies first in the hands of the local union, secondly in the hands of their internationals who are underwriters of such agreements, and in the end the Metal Trades Department

I thought it might be well to give you this brief thumbnail outline of the structure of the American Federation of

Labor. There is no structure of quite the same type in any other country, with the exception of Canada. In no other place is there an international trade union movement. In 1859 some local unions of molders in Canada - and I happen to be an iron molder by trade - affiliated with the molders union in this country for the benefit of greater strength, and from that it developed until for many years the American Federation of Labor unions in Canada have been the same as those here. They send their delegates to our conventions, and there is a real working international trade union movement. There is nothing of that kind on the other side of the Atlantic.

During the last war the countries discovered that many more civilians were required to produce equipment for the armed forces than in any previous war. I have seen various statistics. They run between five and seven civilians for every man in uniform to maintain military equipment, clothes, food, and the other Army requirements. Therefore, the question of national defense today involves a much greater degree than ever before industrial production.

During the war I stayed several times at the Chateau of Gramcourt back of St. Pol and quite close to the old battlefield Agincourt. The old Scotch major who was in charge of our little domicile was interested in the history of the battle and he had gone over the battlefield many, many times and had read all of the histories of the battle that he could secure and had drawn charts so that we could see just how Henry moved in with his army and just how the French constable moved in with his, and the position of both forces the night before the battle and what took place during the battle, Henry's formation of archers enabled them to shoot about five arrows for every one the French archers could discharge. I walked over the battlefield with him. Roughly it covered some two hundred acres of level ground, and there was fought one of the decisive battles. Not long after that I went to Cambrai two days before Cambrai fell. There was rather heavy fighting for some twenty miles on each side of Cambrai and out line was from four to six miles deep. Here was a modern battlefield, roughly covering some five hundred square miles, and it wasn't a decisive battle but merely a general engagement at one point along the battle front. Now, that change made it fairly evident to me that what was required today if nations were to carry on warfare was an industrial production that had been undreamed of in the years gone by. Apparently industrial production is even more important or will be more important in the future than it has been in the past because the weapons

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which modern warfare calls for require a much greater number of the highly skilled workmen and the lesser skilled than ever before.

Therefore, we have the problem of industrial production as a very definite part of the program for national defense. Who is going to determine how that program is going to be carried out? Where are we going to find the men who are most competent to carry out their part of the work? The military naval officer knows the equipment which he thinks he requires. He knows about the quantity, he has been trained to handle the men and to handle the equipment. To what extent should he participate in the problem of production? Who are the ones who understand that problem? Is it the man with a thorough training at West Point or Annapolis or is it the man who has spent his active years in studying the problem of production as a production engineer? Would we want to transfer the man who is a competent production engineer to the armed forces and would it be advisable to transfer the trained officer to overseeing production? It is a question of who are the most efficient men in the instance of a national emergency, who do the two things, one, direct the armed forces, and the other, direct this production which is so necessary if the armed forces are to make any progress. I think the question answers itself very largely, but in connection with that comes another question. Production can be carried on by commissioned officers and can be carried on by civilians. If it is to be carried on by commissioned officers the probabilities are that they will go into an atmosphere they are unfamiliar with, the production. They will have to be retrained to do that work. It seems logical that the men to carry on production are those who from experience have become familiar with production, with the atmosphere of the industrial plant and with the civilian control of the industrial plant.

When the Chief of Staff desires anything he issues orders, and that is all there is to it. He orders it carried out, and while an officer may question the wisdom of an order he receives, it goes no farther than that because that is the only way by which military forces can be operated. In private industry that principle of control is somewhat different. It is not controlled in the same sense as military control by the Chief of Staff. It is directed by those in charge of management. It doesn't work the same way. It is true the general office issues orders. It is true that the superintendent of a shop gets his orders and looks them over. He is quite likely when he looks over the orders to call up the planning department and say, "What do you mean by this? We can't do that with our equipment, and before I go ahead you and I have got to get together." You can't do

that in a military way so well. Frequently it happens that when all of the instructions come from the planning department and everybody has started it is discovered that there are four or five bottlenecks that the planning department failed to visualize, and so we start production going as planned only to find that these bottlenecks are preventing the production from flowing in a normal volume through the plant. Then again there must be conferences, and then the workers themselves have to be taken more or less into consideration because they have their own ideas of production, and they have those ideas to such an extent and so thoroughly recognized by management that a number of our most successful manufacturing businesses offer a reward to workmen who can make a suggestion which will improve production in their department. They have a box where the workers are requested to drop any suggestion they might want to make which in their opinion would improve production. I believe that the records of some of our large corporations which have practiced that method for sometime indicate that about 10 to 12 percent of these suggestions are put into effect. The worker has seen something which even his foreman had failed to notice

I am trying to make the distinction between management in industry and control by military forces. I don't have to ask you what would happen, particularly in a period of national emergency, if all the privates were asked to make such suggestions as they thought would improve their own company or their own regiment or the military program. I think you would have dire confusion and perhaps a good many other things as well.

Now, as production is so necessary and as there must be cooperation and thorough going cooperation between the armed forces and those in production, it seems to me that it is most essential to try and allocate the position which the officer should take in a national emergency, the position which the civilian forces engaged in production should take, and then bring about the highest degree of cooperation between the two which is possible. It seems to me that that cooperation means attending something similar to what was done in 1917, bringing those responsible for the armed forces into contact with those who are responsible for production, sitting down together and talking it over.

I said that the American trade union movement is the only international one in the world. I think that there is even a greater distinction between our organization and the trade union movement of other countries. The trade union movements of all other countries, particularly since the war, as well as before, were anti-military. They feared the military. They

looked upon the military as the governmental power which kept them from enjoying freer, more democratic institutions, and naturally they didn't want to get into a war. The Pacifist attitude in some of the European trade union movements may have a bearing on what is happening in Europe at the present time.

The American Federation of Labor has never been militaristic. It has always regretted that it was necessary to have armed forces. It has had reason once or twice to look askance at the authority as applied by state militias in connection with state labor disturbances, but whatever that attitude may have been, it has never hesitated when our country became involved in a national emergency. The records of the Molders' Local Union in Troy, New York in 1863 - it was a large union at that time, some five hundred members - indicate that the local union members, those who were left, had definitely adjourned any further meetings of the local until the Civil War had been won. The fact is that so many of those were Irish and had been with Philip Henry Sheridan and some other Irish generals and there were no molders left to carry on the industry. I find the same condition was more or less at work during the Spanish-American war. Of course we didn't have to issue the call for men that was necessary during the Civil War.

Previous to the declaration of war by our country the American Federation of Labor under Mr. Gompers, who unfortunately is known only as a labor leader but who was probably one of the ablest statesmen our country has produced and perhaps as sound in his understanding of why he was an American as most Americans, called a conference. That conference adopted a policy. It sincerely hoped that we would not be brought into the war. It was opposed to any steps taken should we be drawn into a war which would place American wage earners under a system where their liberties would be taken from them, but it wound up, and of course all that went before had in mind the final statement of the resolution, that if against our hopes our country was drawn into the war then the American Federation of Labor would pledge itself to do everything in its power to assist the government until the war had been won. No such declaration was made by the trade union movement of any other country.

I would like to read at this point an excerpt from a letter which I received under date of April 17, 1939, from London. I don't want to disclose the writer's name except to say that he is a dear friend, that he has been one of the leading thinkers and officers in the British trade union movement for almost half a century and that he wrote to me from the bottom of his heart

and was discussing the frightful condition that England was in. He had discussed that with me a year ago. I spent four or five days with him two years ago and he was merely bringing up a summation of what had taken place. He felt that the pacifist attitude of the Labor Party had much to do with the situation England had found herself in, and I bring this out because I want to contrast with the British attitude the position of the American Federation of Labor. I quote from this letter.

"I agree with those who claim that Mr. Chamberlain was deceived at Munich, he could hardly escape being deceived. His handicaps were too great. In the first place, he is a gentleman with a profound respect for pledges and treaties. No one outside Nazi or Fascist circles would accuse Hitler or Mussolini of being influenced by similar restraints. Then again, he knew of the British unpreparedness. He must have known also, as I have known for more than three years, of underground aerodromes at places on the Black Sea. Probably he feared the trouble which would be raised in England by the Pacifists if he, when coming into power in 1931, had started attempts to restore the decayed armaments of Great Britain. There certainly would have been trouble, because for ten years the country, led by the Labor Party, in and out of office, had been swayed by slipshod sentimentality.

"Lansbury wandering around the Chancellories and through the by-ways of Europe with both hands held above his head and crying for peace at any price and Lord Baldwin, plaintively bleating for peace in our time, made aggression almost certain. Neither of these men, or their immediate followers, apparently gave any thought of the effect such bleating would have upon the gangster mentalities of Europe or upon their own country's future "

Now, when I tell you that the man who wrote that is probably an able man and a thinker as the British trade union movement has developed, you will realize its significance.

The American worker as well as those who are members of the American Federation of Labor do not want war. They are very much opposed to war. They are fearful of the consequence of war. They believe in exhausting all the methods of peace to prevent clashes between nations rather than resorting to force or even resorting to threats of any kind in our international relations. But they have steadily opposed that type of Pacifist who is a professional and they have opposed the efforts

of those who followed these professional Pacifists in endeavoring to have our convention adopt resolutions which could be used by these extreme Pacifists to bolster up their philosophy

Now, I don't want to discuss the philosophy of the Pacifist, I have had to listen to it so often myself that I wouldn't want to inflect it on anyone else. I think the American Federation of Labor, if it is anything, is a realist organization. We are concerned with realities. We are not carried away by theoretical pictures of what would happen if some policy, some theory, was put into practice. So you will have seen in conventions of the American Federation of Labor strong strictures against the use of Armed force, but you will not find in any of the conventions any record of approval of that type of Pacifist that I am referring to.

The American Federation of Labor changed its attitude toward the Army and the Navy rather slowly. In the beginning we had a number of men who did believe in the theory of Pacifism, of turning the right cheek after the left cheek had been slapped, who believed that the kindly, friendly hand in the end was more powerful than the closed, striking fist. Change in that came during the war. It was very definite. After the war Colonel C. B. Ross, who has passed to his reward, was assigned by the Chief of Staff to attend conventions of the Federation and become acquainted with the leaders of the movement and find out just what they were doing. In the 1924 convention held in El Paso, Texas, Colonel Ross passed a resolution around among the delegates to get signers, which would be an approval of the Citizens' Training Camps and the Officers' Training Camps. We didn't get that through. My own organization wondered whether something had happened to me because I was one of the first signers of the resolution. We wanted the matter to have not an official approval but a heartfelt approval. The following year members of the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor were invited to attend the Officers' Training Camp at Plattsburg, New York. I think it was Father Daly, that famous chaplain of New York City, who undertook to steer them around. A number of the members of the Executive Council at that time were of Irish extraction and members of the Catholic church. They stayed there five days. The convention was not given an opportunity of initiating any further action. The Executive Council on its recommendation requested the convention to approve of the Officers' Training Camps and the Civilian Training Camps, so there our organization placed itself definitely on record, not as approving of militarism but of approving of a sufficiently sane policy of national defense so that our country would be certainly safe from attacks from whatever quarter they might come.

For a moment I want to touch on what happened in Ohio during the war, briefly touch on the part that communism is going to play, and then give you an opportunity of throwing bricks at me in the form of questions which you think I can't answer.

Governor James Cox, war Governor of Ohio, wanted to make the best showing of any state in the union during the war. He immediately called some six trade union officers in the state, most of whom, were also national officers, and told them he was making them his labor cabinet for the period of the war, that he knew he would require trade union advice from practical men as much as he would require advice and cooperation from the manufacturers. He was informed that he had made a splendid beginning. He wanted to know what was meant by that remark and he was told that the registration boards had all been appointed, that they were all business men or professional men, there was not a single trade unionist on any of those boards, that already in the southern part of Ohio manufacturers had told their employees that if they gave satisfactory results they need not be fearful of registration, but if they were not giving satisfactory results they would most assuredly go with the colors. Now, that was bad, very bad. The Governor said, "what can we do?" Apparently he had the right to add to all of these boards, so he agreed to put one trade unionist on every registration board throughout the state. He said, "How am I going to appoint them?" We said, "Leave that to us. We will leave that up to every central labor council to elect its own representative on the board." "Oh," he said, "But you would probably appoint a number of men who were not qualified." He said, "That is true. We probably will, but we will wait until we find a man is incompetent and we will remove him, but if you want to create the confidence in the community that should exist among the workers, then have one of their representatives on every board." I don't have to tell you that Ohio made about as good a showing as any state in the union, but what was important there was there were no misunderstandings, there were no unjustified or justified fears in the worker's mind that any advantage would be taken of him as contrasted with the young men of the more fortunate families. It is the creation of confidence in the minds of the workers of our country which is more important than anything else which can be done in the instance of a national emergency, because after all, the morale of the Army while all-important, is no more important than the morale of the civilians at home, and I believe that an army with splendid morale can have its effectiveness destroyed if the morale breaks at home. They know of it and their heart is gone.

There is not time this morning for any review of the part that communism is playing in our country. Some of you know that the Dies Committee heard a great deal of evidence. You probably saw reference to the evidence in some newspapers which would lead you to believe that a good deal of it was bunkum and moonshine, and so on. I make the suggestion that every one of you, if he has the time, procure a copy of the hearings before the Dies Committee and read them, and I hope you will not think I am immodest when I suggest that if you are without the time to read all of them that you read my testimony, not because of anything which I said that could have been of any particular service but because of the documentation with which my evidence was largely made up. I know what the danger is. I have been the one in the American Federation of Labor who for many years has had the assignment, a more or less voluntary one, of keeping in touch with subversive activities. I began that way back in 1907 and have been following it ever since. I should know something about these activities.

(Colonel Miles. Colonel, may I interrupt? I am sure everybody here would be glad to have you elaborate as much as you would on that.)

Everyone knows of the Communist revolution in Russia. Everybody knows that in a general way in the beginning they believed the revolution could not be successful unless they were successful in establishing similar revolutions in all the other countries. They immediately set up one of the best directed, most efficient propaganda agencies that any country has ever established. They had money to carry out this propaganda work even if they didn't have it at home, and so a corps of men, very intelligent, very loyal to the Communist idea and ideal, trained in the work they were to do, were sent to almost every civilized and semi-civilized country of the world for they worked as actively in Mongolia as they did in the United States.

In the industrial countries they realized that to make any headway it was necessary that they gain control, or a controlling part at least, in the national trade union movement, if they failed to do that they couldn't reach the workers. They had two types of organization in countries like our own. They had the regular Communist party, which we know of. Their party was given a place on the ballot, they nominate their candidates, that is known as the legal Communist party, but they know full well that that legal Communist party cannot carry out the program of itself alone, and so they have what is known as the illegal faction. In this country for a long time there has existed side

by side with the regular Communist organization, the legal one, their illegal organization. The members of this illegal organization are especially trained much as those who work under G-2 are trained to do their work, and they do the things through the illegal group which the legal group can't undertake to do. They keep their special records and they keep them in a separate place from those of the legal party and they have all of the methods of communication which they can develop so that the moment an alarm comes, records and so on, are either destroyed or put in some other place. In other words, there has been working in this country for some twenty years, a group of Communists thoroughly believing in their ideas and their ideology, as they call it, to carry on illegal activities.

We endeavored to keep Communism out of the trade union movement just as we endeavored to keep socialism out. In fact, my first work was in connection with the efforts of the Socialist party to control our trade unions which was quite different from the Communist party. They came Communism and my work in that direction had to be increased. Many of the international unions have in their constitution a prohibition against Communism. No Communist can be a member of that union. That prohibition is in the constitution of the United Mine Workers of America up to the present time.

Unfortunately, when the division was created by Mr. Lewis, conditions, all of which I am not familiar with, led him to place a large number of active Communists on his payroll as organizers, so for the first time in our country Communism officially infiltrated into a national labor movement. They had no interest except a passing one in organizing the men into trade unions. Their interest was in building up the Communist propaganda and the Communist program. The central committee of the Communist party itself, now known as the National Committee since their last convention, appointed certain outstanding members of the committee to take charge of certain work. Jack Stachel was appointed to have general supervision of all trade union activity. He was not on the C.I.O. payroll. William Weinstone was assigned to have charge of the automobile organizing campaign and he spent all of his time there. There was another one who was assigned to the steel workers organizing committees, and so on.

We had this peculiar or interesting condition. Members of the Communist party selected by the party on the payroll of the C.I.O. as organizers for the C.I.O. reporting to the C.I.O. and at the same time reporting to the Communist chief in their territory on what they were doing to build up and strengthen

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Communist purposes in this country. They did that in a good many ways and one was exceedingly simple. As the Communist organizer was successful in organizing a local union, he saw to it that a member of the party became the president of the new local union or the corresponding secretary, or some other key position in the local union. So we now have Communism entrenched in our country because of the C.I.O. The method they have adopted here was made possible because of the condition caused by a division in the American trade union movement but the method was the identical one which they had previously applied in France which almost prevented the French government from functioning, the identical methods they had applied in Spain before the recent Civil War and it is the method they are now applying here.

Now I want to give you a chance to ask some questions. I merely want to say that if you will get the testimony before the Dies Committee last year you will have documentary evidence of all that I have been referring to. Personally sometimes I am accused of not liking Mr. John L. Lewis. I think that that is the absolute truth. But my opposition to the C.I.O. from the beginning has been the fact that it opened the door to the infiltration of Communist leadership and activities inside of an American labor movement.

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