

ONE NEEDLE TRADES UNION

TWO conventions, one of the cloak and dressmakers and the other of the furriers, are to open in New York City on December 28 and 29 respectively. They are expected to culminate a few days later in the establishment, not of two, but of one new left-wing union in the needle trades' industry. The calls for these conventions have been issued by the National Organization Committee of the cloak and dressmakers and by the Furriers National Committee. Energetic preparatory work has been carried on in all the centers of the needle trades' industry and there is every indication that the masses are rallying to the support of this movement.

This action of the militant needle trades' workers comes after years of struggle between various left-wing elements and a "Socialist" leadership which was ever growing more and more reactionary and becoming more and more an open tool of the bosses. After 1922 this struggle took on a clearer and sharper form with the organization of the needle trades' section of the Trade Union Educational League and the adoption of its program by the needle trades' left wing for amalgamation, a shop delegate form of organization, and a class struggle policy against the bosses. The great mass of the membership of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union and of the International Fur Workers Union quickly rallied to this new aggressive and well organized left wing because of its program and because of the fact that in every struggle it was they who developed the program and furnished the militant strike leadership.

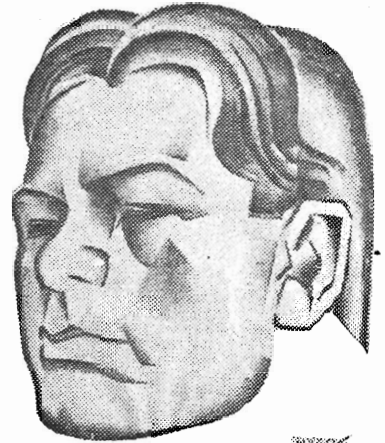
Left Wing Expelled

The reactionary leadership of these old unions, supported by the equally reactionary leadership of the Socialist Party and by the Jewish Daily Forward, driven to desperation by the constantly growing strength of the forces supporting the T. U. E. L.,

adopted policies of ever more open collaboration with the employers, the police, and the corrupt, reactionary officials of the A. F. of L. Left wing supporters were expelled from the unions by the hundreds. Gangster rule became the law in the unions as well as in the shops. The officials were ready to destroy the unions rather than permit the union membership to turn the leadership over to the left wing forces.

These attacks did not stop, but on the contrary stimulated, the growth of the left wing. Left wing members permitted neither expulsions, gangsterism, nor the police to turn them away from their course. In the shops and on the picket lines they took the lead in the struggles for higher wages, shorter hours and improved working conditions. In the unions they fought sharply against the ever more open be-

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BEN GOLD
Leader of left wing furriers, one of the organizers of the Needle Trades Union.



Mass picketing by Left Wing Needle Trades' workers during the recent big strike in New York City

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trayals of the workers' interests by the leadership and for democracy in the union. Finally in both the I. L. G. W. U. and in the Furriers' Union, with the support of the overwhelming majority of the membership, the left wing gained control of the most decisive sections of the unions.. With the unions in their hands the left wing successfully lead great struggles against the employers to improve the workers' conditions, in spite of the continuous sabotage of the right wing.

Reactionary United Front Formed

These successes served to cement more firmly the united front of the old leadership, the Socialist Party, the A. F. of L. bureaucracy, the judges and the police against the left wing. Hundreds of militant workers were beaten up by gangsters, hundreds more were thrown into jail by the city authorities, and the largest sections of the unions were expelled. In short the once powerful unions were destroyed rather than permit them to become real fighting workers' organizations instead of company unions.

The left wing tried until the last to preserve the unions and maintain their fighting power against the bosses, but early this year it became evident that, to further serve the interests of the needle trades' workers, it was necessary to create a new union. Since that time all preparations have been made to insure the success of the conventions called for December 28th and 29th.

But the reactionary forces have not yet lost hope. The old leaders, as agents of the employers, are still trying to prevent the development of a strong left wing organization which they know will be powerful enough to wrest great concessions immediately from the bosses and at the same time prepare the masses for even greater struggles against capitalism. Therefore these reactionary leaders are now trying to accomplish by "peace" maneuvers what they failed to accomplish by open warfare against the membership.

Schlessinger for "Peace"

In the November 16th issue of "Justice" the official organ of the old gang, Benjamin Schlessinger, who recently took the place of the defeated and discredited Sigman as President of the I. L. G. W., declares his desire "to heal wounds and to bring about harmony and solidarity of action". This speech represents only a beginning in this direction. They tried first to brutally exterminate the left wing and to turn the needle trades' unions into company unions. They failed! Now they will try to accomplish the

same end by peace and harmony maneuvers. And they will again fail!

In order to defeat these maneuvers, however, the left wing leaders must clearly realize, that after months of struggle, many workers can be misled by this fakery unless aggressive counter measures are taken. It must be made clear to every worker that Schlessinger stands for the same company union policy—a policy of cooperation with the employers—as did Sigman. He is for a policy of peace with the employers and warfare against the interests of the workers. Momentarily he talks of peace in the union only to more effectively serve the employers by trying to prevent the building of a real union in the industry. First they tried warfare against the membership and failed. Now they want an armistice to again prepare for an even more bitter struggle against the militant rank and file which he hopes will bring better results for his masters—the needle trades' bosses.

Intensified Struggle Necessary

The left wing forces must meet these maneuvers by intensified work among the workers in the garment shops, by intensified struggle on all fronts against both the employers and their representatives in the union. The fight for **one union** in the needle trades and for a shop delegate form of organization for this new union must be intensified. These struggles in turn must be closely linked up with the struggle to re-establish union conditions and job control in the garment factories.

The left wing needle trades' leaders have shown in the past that they could wage the most determined and on the whole successful struggle against the employers and all their henchmen both inside and outside of the union. Now they must intensify their work to checkmate this latest move of the reactionaries.

There is every indication that in this they will also be successful and that the conventions of December 28 and 29 will represent the great majority of the ladies garment workers and the furriers. The plan is to open with two conventions, one of cloak and dressmakers, the other of furriers, and then, after certain preliminary work has been done, to amalgamate these two conventions and to form **one union** to include both groups of workers.

This will conclude the first step in the greater task of bringing about one union for the entire needle trades industry which will be able to completely establish union conditions in the garment factories of the United States.