WHAT'S WRONG WITH LABOR?

Federation Threatened With I.W.W. Control from the Inside

It is generally believed that industrial revolution, if it ever should reach the point of a real menace in this country, would come through the radical I.W.W. Against the spread of propaganda that must precede such a condition there has been the bulwark of the conservative American Federation of Labor.

No doubt this is the viewpoint of the average citizen when attention is called to a threat of an overturn of the existing order. But recently there has been a change in position, and if revolution is attempted it will be through the American Federation of Labor. The I.W.W. has not reformed. It has adopted different tactics; first, to revolutionize the federation from within; then, through it, to set on foot the larger revolution.

What are the A.F. of L. leaders doing to head this off? To get an understanding of the factors entering into the answer, some discernible on the surface, some hidden within, it is necessary to take a look backward, and set forth the irreconcilable antagonism of the sets of ideas on which the organizations are founded. The antagonism was set forth by William Haywood, now under twenty years' prison sentence for anti-war activities, when the I.W.W. was formed in Chicago in 1905.

Read this the Continental Congress of the working class. "There is no organization that has for its purpose the same object as that for which you are called together today. The American Federation of Labor, which presumes to be the labor movement of this country, is not a working class movement. You are going to be confronted with the so-called labor leader, the man who will tell you that the interests of the workingman and the capitalists are identical. There is no man who has an ounce of honesty in his make-up but recognizes the fact that there is a continuous struggle between the two classes, and this organization will be formed, based, and founded on the class struggle, having in view no compromise and no surrender.

One organization's aim was to attain some method of co-operation between capital and labor and the consequent mutual benefit. The other aimed to eliminate capital.

With such diametric opposition in ideas, the two organizations stood at challenge from the start, as no rival labor organizations had stood before. Sixteen radical unions affiliated with...
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Assembly is the most prominent federation man in the movement.

These two currents, socialistic tendency and the move to form a labor party, add to the tension in the federation caused by the inherent antagonism between the conservative leader and such a radical as Foster. So far, it is pointed out, situations have been permitted to drift. Issues have not been brought to challenge in the rank and file, and no one knows where the lines of demarkation run.

The longer the drift continues, the better chance the extremists have for making inroads on the steady-going element of the federation, it is asserted, and the less safe will be the ground for the opinion of conservative leaders like Woll, that the long-tested stability of the American Federation of Labor will stand proof against assaults of radicalism of whatever kind. To the criticism of temporizing with radicalism within the federation, however, the conservative leaders answer that they have not been neglectful. They say that in addressing their attention to obtaining from employers the recognition of what they hold to be labor's rights, at the head of which they place collective bargaining by trade union representatives, they are striving for the only real preventive of the spread of radicalism.