

# The Guild Front Is Solid

*The hopes of the reactionaries are shattered as the news union's referendum shows a progressive majority*

By William B. Smith

**M**ORE than five thousand members of the American Newspaper Guild voted recently in a nation-wide referendum to determine whether or not the program adopted at the Guild's St. Louis convention fairly reflects the aims and views of its membership. Although two questions were of overshadowing immediate importance, namely, affiliation with the Committee for Industrial Organization and jurisdictional expansion to include so-called commercial departments, the program served to put the Guild on record regarding several other vital issues.

At the St. Louis convention delegates strongly supported every point laid before them by the convention program committee. In the matter of C.I.O. affiliation and wider jurisdiction, the vote was 118½ to 18½. Several Guild units, however, notably those of Washington, D. C., and Columbus, O., urged that so far-reaching a program should be submitted to the entire membership, particularly since the convention had considered joining the C.I.O. and the inclusion of business departments as a single question. Some weeks later the International Executive Board voted unanimously to submit the points at issue to a membership referendum.

While the referendum was under discussion, William Green took occasion to attack the convention program and especially Heywood Broun, international president of the Guild. Among other things Green raised the Red scare, saying, "It might be a good idea for Mr. Broun, who is a stooge for the avowed Communists in the C.I.O., to resign his presidency of the Guild, at least until the referendum is completed." The A. F. of L. leader was bitter, too, over the idea that men like Walter Lippmann, Mark Sullivan, and others, "could hold common aims with telephone operators, ad takers, carrier boys, and what have you." Characteristically, Mr. Green was joined by the publishers, nearly all of whom were anxious to hamstring the Guild.

Because newspaper people often see events at first hand and are usually competent observers, it is of special interest when they voice opinions that are not subject to editorial policy or shaped by pressure from the business office. The Guild referendum furnishes just such an off-the-record cross-section of views held by men and women who write the news. But before examining the results, let us look briefly at the past history of the American Newspaper Guild and its developing relationship to the rest of the labor movement.

At St. Paul in 1934, the Guild's first convention deferred consideration of whether or



Heywood Broun

Soriano

not to join the American Federation of Labor. At that time there arose grave doubts about the advisability of such a step—professional men questioned their place in a labor union. In 1935, the Cleveland convention voted to hold a referendum, a two-thirds majority being required for affiliation with the A. F. of L. Again there was hesitancy, and the membership decided against affiliation by a narrow margin. Preparing for the next convention, the Executive Board urged the local Guilds to instruct their delegates on this question, and the 1936 convention voted almost seventeen to one in favor of joining the Federation.

This maturing determination to take an active part in the labor movement coincided with the rapid growth of a new spirit among millions of American workers—the resolve to organize in industrial unions. From the outset, the Newspaper Guild looked favorably on the Committee for Industrial Organization and recognized the fundamental need for unity within labor's ranks. Thus the Guild's affiliation did not by any means range its membership on the side of William Green and those A. F. of L. leaders who repudiated John L. Lewis and the C.I.O. And as the struggle grew more intense, Guild sympathies swung strongly toward the new industrial organization.

By the spring of 1937 this feeling had so far developed that the Executive Board of the A.N.G. declined to send a representative to the Cincinnati meeting of the A. F. of L. Executive Council. Basing their refusal chiefly on two counts, the Guild Executive Board wrote Mr. Green in this vein:

Again and again we called for unity on the basis of democracy and we do not now believe it is going to be achieved on the basis of further departure therefrom. We find it difficult to regard this conference as bona fide inasmuch as it makes no provision for the representatives of two million American workers. . . .

Nor is this ever more open departure from democracy our only consideration in refusing to condone the proceedings by participating in them. With amazement, we note evidence that the Executive Council now permits connivance with employers for the purpose of defeating workers in their efforts to bargain collectively. . . . If the American Federation of Labor is to be an agency for preventing the free and independent association of wage earners, we will not be a party to such a betrayal. . . .

With this progressive background and a clear view of the labor scene, it is not surprising that its program committee should offer the 1937 Guild convention a forward-looking and comprehensive agenda. And it was equally to be expected that reactionaries within the labor movement as well as the vast majority of employers and publishers would fight any and all such commitments by the newspaper profession.

The full program accepted by the St. Louis convention, and later submitted to the entire Guild membership, included the following points in addition to C.I.O. affiliation and wider jurisdiction:

1. A collective bargaining policy, mandatory upon all Guild locals, which centered around the five-day, forty-hour week and the Guild shop. Since the latter has been challenged as destroying the freedom of the press, it is important to understand exactly what the term means. A Guild shop requires all employees to join the union but permits the publisher to choose new employees at will. Thus it is neither an open shop, which invites yellow-dog contracts and other anti-union tactics, nor does it specify, as in a closed shop, that new employees must be obtained through the union.
2. The Guild condemned the policy of the administration and Congress in failing to provide adequately for reemployment and called for an immediate appropriation of at least three billion dollars for the W.P.A.
3. The Guild supported President Roosevelt's Court plan, reaffirmed the A.N.G.'s demand for a clarifying amendment to the Constitution, and backed the Black-Connery wages and hours bill.
4. Terminated the requirement that one vice-president be elected from a wire service (such as the Associated Press or the United Press). This change was intended to eliminate any conception of differentiation between wire-service members and others by making the executive board representative of the membership as a whole and not of any particular field of newspaper work.
5. Adopted a resolution reaffirming the A.N.G.'s conviction that independent political action must be taken along with economic action and recommended

participation in genuine local expressions of such a political movement.

6-7. Made changes in the methods of suspension for non-payment of dues, and for charter revocation.

8. Adopted a resolution attacking fascism as a force which destroyed trade-unions and supporting the Spanish people in their fight against it.

Most of these propositions touch upon public issues around which there has been established a growing cleavage between progressive and reactionary forces in America. And while the Guild may have found its own work of organization impeded by the delay and uncertainty involved in holding a referendum, the vote of its membership has furnished a clear and definitive answer to the stories and convention critics alike. At St. Louis the program was adopted by delegates representing 90 percent of the A.N.G. membership. The referendum not only serves to gauge the membership's collective opinion, but also to demonstrate whether or not the elected delegates were truly representative.

Replying to charges that the convention program was engineered by "a little group in New York," and did not reflect the present aims of Guild members, the Committee for the Convention Program stated:

St. Louis marked no change in the course of our organization. It merely continued the logical development of the A.N.G. along the course of enlightened militant trade-union democracy, conscious of its place in the sun, which has meant economic gains for newspapermen and a growing newspapermen's union instead of the innumerable abortive attempts of the past. Consider the convention issues, as presented in the referendum, in the light of the development of the American Newspaper Guild and their present application.

During the discussion that followed the St. Louis convention, the American Newspaper Publishers' Association took an active part, masking its bitter opposition to the Guild behind pleas for freedom of the press. Just as hypocritical slogans about the right to work have been used to cover strike-breaking vigilanteism, so, too, freedom of the press has become the pet device of union-hating publishers. And once again, some timid liberals have fallen in line. Since this "issue" will probably come more and more into the foreground, it may be well to get a clear perspective on it.

To begin with, the publication of newspapers and periodicals is a business enterprise, and the mere fact that a publisher sells news of more or less general interest does not destroy or even weaken his primary motive, which is to make money. Neglecting the unquestioned influence that advertising schedules exert on editorial policy, it is obvious that the search for profits sets up an employer-employee relationship in the newspaper business that is essentially like that prevailing in other industries. This being the case, it is manifestly ridiculous to expect that newspaper people should live in an ivory tower remote from the labor movement when their jobs are subject to all the vicissitudes and murderous competition of any business employment.

The Guild program committee recognized this clearly when it stated:

To cite only one of innumerable instances, Harry Chandler's Los Angeles Times, which will not tolerate any union man in its employ, in an editorial hailed the referendum as "the revolt of the American Newspaper Guild against the radical leadership of Heywood Broun." It continued, "The courageous stand of the American Newspaper Publishers' Association against an editorial closed shop and for a free press has its influence in this revolt." What the editorial fails to state is that under cover of opposition to the "editorial closed shop," the A.N.P.A. really is fighting the large gains in salaries and hours which have been spread wide during the past year by the consistent policies of the A.N.G.

Moreover, as capitalist entrepreneurs, publishers have a very direct anti-labor bias and a monetary interest in questions of wages, hours, etc. For them to demand that only non-Guild or anti-Guild reporters should cover labor news is tantamount to insisting that the public shall read labor stories handled exclu-

sively by men and women who share the viewpoint of their bosses. This claim is seriously advanced as a way to ensure freedom of the press!

Evidently Guild members are fully aware of the principle which is at stake here, for their vote was emphatically in favor of the Guild shop 2917 to 1924. And, indeed, with the single exception of the anti-fascist resolution, where the vote was 2409 for and 2592 against, every feature of the convention program was strongly upheld in the referendum. The question of C.I.O. affiliation found 3392 members favoring it, with 1691 opposed.

Thus this widely publicized poll, from which mistaken reactionaries had hoped so much, has actually shown the basic labor-conscious militancy of the American Newspaper Guild. It is not too much to expect that this verdict will breathe new meaning into our constitutional right of a free press.



"I suppose you're going to tell me Stalin knows more than the United Press."



# READERS' FORUM

*Further evidence of army influence in the C.C.C.—A Hague conference and a correction*

## TO THE NEW MASSES:

Permit me to compliment you for publishing the article "The Army Educates the C.C.C." Since I have had a varied experience in the administrative end of the C.C.C. educational set-up, I doubly appreciate the service that Albert Dahlquist has rendered in writing this article.

I can testify personally to the all-pervading repressive influence of the army administration upon the educational advisers in the camps and their educational superiors and upon the entire educational program. When I was chosen for my work, I was told that it was done only on condition that I show complete subservience (euphemistically called "co-operation") to the army. (It was known that I was at least "liberal.")

I can testify personally to the widespread existence of espionage practiced by the army against individual educational advisers. In this as in other matters, the average camp army personnel (made up of reserve officers drawn largely from commercial life) is inferior to the educational advisers in educational achievements and experience. As a group, they are wholly unsuited by training and experience to handle a non-military group of youth—at salaries considerably above those paid educational advisers who are trained in youth leadership.

Periodically the camp commanders are required by their army superiors to make complete reports on any "subversive activities" that have come to their attention—not merely within the boundaries of their camps but anywhere in the surrounding territory.

Reading matter is closely censored by the army. On the few occasions when mildly progressive or advanced ideas have appeared in book or pamphlet form in War Department purchases for the camp libraries, the ax has fallen immediately upon such discovery. This emasculation of citizenship teaching in the camps is nowhere better illustrated than in the case of a bulletin on the 1936 election, prepared by the C.C.C. educational division for distribution to the camps. Since the army was always urging "citizenship" training, the educational division took the generals at their own word; prepared the bulletin urging C.C.C. enrollees to inform themselves on the platforms of all political parties, and the speeches and radio talks of all presidential candidates; and sent the bulletin, as was customary, to the army for approval. In double-quick time it was returned as "propaganda" and refused publication.

Other examples of censorship are found in the list of magazines sent to all C.C.C. camp libraries. About the only semi-worth-while magazines received are *Time*, *Life*, the *Digest*, *News-Week*, *Current History*, and two or three popular scientific journals. The rest of the forty-five magazines received are either reactionary sheets like *Liberty* or lurid pulps. The only "labor" journal received is the U. S. Labor Department's monthly "Labor Information Bulletin," whose presence, one corps area educational director gladly told the Labor Department, effectively "answered" many socially conscious questions of enrollees and thereby did valiant service in keeping down radical sentiment.

Camp papers, issued by the enrollees of most of the C.C.C. camps, are highly regarded by the military as "morale" builders. These are supervised by the educational advisers, but they are right under the thumbs of the camp commanders. This is shown by a survey made of camp papers in one corps area. Hardly a single progressive sentiment could be found in the hundreds of issues examined, but there were many feature articles, editorials, and news items of an anti-labor and Red-baiting nature. Frequent editorials plump for military training in the camps. Much the same is true of *Happy Days*, the national C.C.C. newspaper, which was roundly condemned by the U. S. Commissioner of Education for an edi-

torial in its pages inciting enrollees to violence against other enrollees caught reading the magazine *Champion of Youth*. But this reproof came only after considerable mass pressure. Incidentally, the great majority of the enrollees are strongly against military control of the camps and the installation of military training as urged by the army.

But the fault doesn't all lie with the army; much of it lies with the pro-army servile tools in the upper reaches of the educational division. Many, but not all, of these officials stand covertly or openly with the army and against the small measure of progressive influence with which U. S. Commissioner of Education Studebaker tries to leaven the solid lump of military-dominated education. Many corps and district educational advisers with a military background frankly tell their camp educational advisers that there is danger of the army regime losing control of education and they must openly fight it when the time comes.

At the head of all C.C.C. work—czar over the cooperating agencies—army, Office of Education, and Forest Service—stands Robert Fechner, former Washington lobbyist for the machinists' union. He was placed in charge as an olive branch to the aristocracy of labor after widespread resentment had arisen against army control and the low wages paid C.C.C. enrollees. Fechner kotows to no one—but the army. He has always stifled progressive outcroppings in the C.C.C. and forced the resignation of the corps' first educational director, an outstanding progressive educator. Fechner's oft-repeated friendship for the educational program can be judged by his testimony before the recent congressional committee which considered C.C.C. continuance: that if much more financial support were given to the educational work it would cost the country too much.

C.C.C. high officials ceaselessly prate on the tune that the C.C.C. is a great educational experiment—except when they are asked to provide a little money for educational work. Then they maintain that it is almost exclusively a work project. (Educational expenditures have been practically nil thus far; even when salaries of all educational officials and overhead are counted, the cost is about ten dollars a year per enrollee—about one-tenth the figure for the public schools.)

There is little hope for true progress in the C.C.C. educational work until the army is ousted from control.  
Seattle, Wash.

JAMES R. STEELE.

## An Industrial Relations Conference

### TO THE NEW MASSES:

Your readers surely will be interested in the conference now being held at The Hague, under the

auspices of the International Industrial Relations Conference, to which I am a delegate.

The subject selected for this summer's intimate conference, the world's natural resources and standards of living, grows directly out of the World Social Economic Congress held at Amsterdam, Holland, in 1931. In its studies of the causes of international unemployment and of the possibilities of social economic planning directed toward raising standards of living, the fundamental problem of the rational utilization of the world's natural resources and raw materials clearly emerged.

There are splendid economic revolutionary scientists ready with a cure for all the ills due to unemployment and low standards of living. But, we are now in need of men and women who are actual social economic students to prove to right-minded people, that our earth stands ready to feed and clothe all her children without resorting to political theft, war, destruction, and all the hullabaloo of inter-nation enmities.

The Hague, Holland.

EVA ROBIN.

## We Are Corrected

### TO THE NEW MASSES:

Your September 14 issue carried an editorial headed "Green and Company Unions," which voiced your belief that A. F. of L. unions have entered into a partnership with employers to take over the part formerly played by outlawed company unions.

The writer of the editorial, to illustrate his point, holds up the contract of the Commercial Artists' & Designers' Union, Local 20329, A. F. of L., with the New York *Journal-American*, as an example. He accuses the union of being one of the "pliant A. F. of L. unions" with whom employers are anxious to deal and believes it significant that "William Randolph Hearst . . . should make an agreement after steadfastly refusing to deal with the Newspaper Guild."

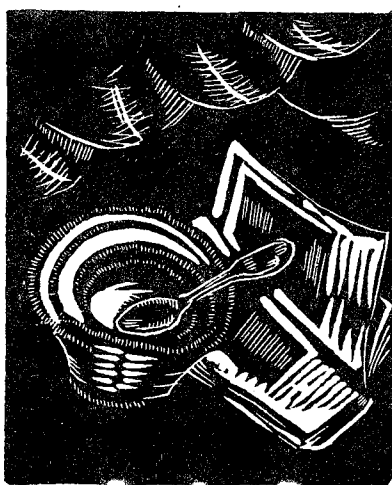
It is unfortunate that your editorial writer felt that facts were less important than adjectives. A glance at the nearest newspaper, plus a short talk with a representative of the C.A.D.U., would have stayed him from holding up to scorn a militant, progressive, and democratic trade union.

Hearst did not rush to sign a contract with the C.A.D.U. Negotiations were begun in April and the contract signed in September. That doesn't look like anxiety on Hearst's part. Moreover, Hearst never refused to deal with the Newspaper Guild. The issue between them was the preferential shop. After negotiations with the Guild, Hearst posted a bulletin board agreement which provided for improved working conditions and pay increases. Hearst again negotiated with the Guild at the time the *American* folded up and agreed to certain important concessions.

As for the "pliant union" accusation leveled at the C.A.D.U., did your editorial writer happen to notice that for more than four months the union had been conducting a strike at the Fleischer Studio—the producers of the animated cartoons, Popeye and Betty Boop? Did he read of the innumerable arrests, the daily mass picket lines, the nation-wide boycott against Fleischer pictures released by Paramount, the many other strike activities which the union is carrying out, that is making this, the first strike of organized artists, a mark for other "white-collar" unions to aim at? You won't call that pliant, would you?

In all fairness, we ask that you make known to your readers that you retract your characterization of the Commercial Artists' & Designers' Union and point out the true facts in the matter.

JAMES HULLEY, President,  
Commercial Artists' & Designers' Union,  
New York. Local 20329, A. F. of L.



Woodcut by Helen West Heller