

# THE LABOR HERALD

Published monthly at 118 N. La Salle St. Subscription price \$1.50 per year. The Trade Union Educational League, Publishers.  
"Entered as second class matter March 23, 1922, at the postoffice at Chicago, Illinois, under the Act of March 3, 1879."

Vol. II.

MARCH, 1923



No. 1

## Railroaders in Retreat

By William Z. Foster

**T**HE railroad shopmen's strike, begun on July 1st of last year, still drags its weary course.

Approximately half of the mileage of the country is still affected by the struggle. Prospects of anything like a real settlement grow less and less. Only the indomitable courage of the rank and file makes possible the continuation of the battle. It is a bitter price indeed that the shopmen are paying for their faulty form of organization. Had they been properly organized, so that all the railroad crafts could have stood together, this great strike would never have happened. But as it was, with the unions divided against each other, solidarity depended upon the whims of reactionary labor officials like Grable, Fitzgerald, and others. Consequently united action was impossible in the crisis. These men double-crossed the rank and file and encouraged the companies to press on in their offensive against the shopmen.

### The Great Northern Settlement

In the past month or so, several roads have "signed up," including the Great Northern. Efforts have been made, notably by the railroad paper *Labor*, to make it appear that these settlements are important victories. While the unfortunate fact is that they are little short of complete surrender. How little the shopmen had to say in drafting the Great Northern "agreement" is shown by the fact that it was negotiated by O. E. Schoonover and P. C. Bradley, Chairmen of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen respectively.

Under the "agreement," the union men have no rights whatever. Their unions are not recognized, the presumption being that the company unions will be the ones to deal with the company for the men hereafter. The men are to be taken back just as the company needs them, supposedly in the order of their seniority, but in reality just as the bosses see fit. Any disputes of the rehiring of the workers, shall be taken up not by the officials of the shopmen's organizations, but by the above mentioned Brotherhood Chairmen. A supposed concession is that the returning strikers will not be required to affiliate with the company unions.

Considering the outrageous treatment given them by both the company and the scabs, the returning strikers are filled with bitterness. Consequently of interest is a clause reading "Mr. Mc Gowan (Department representative) gives his personal assurance that there will be no propaganda or bitterness." Then we are informed by the signers of the "agreement" that, "It is our firm conviction that the railway company has entered into this settlement in good faith and with a sincere desire to measure out even-handed justice to all, and an opportunity should not be afforded to any local official to back away from that understanding by any overt acts of the men returning to work." This is rubbing salt in the open wounds of the shopmen.

### Signal Men Rewarded

The Railroad Labor Board has just handed down a decision restoring the eight hour day, with time and one-half pay for overtime, to 15,000 members of the Signalmen's union. The workers demanded increases in wages but these were denied by the Board. The three railroad representatives voted against the decision. One labor member, A. O. Wharton, did not vote for it, but filed a dissenting opinion in which he maintained increased living costs called for higher wages.

How the capitalistic interests generally look upon this decision is shown by the notorious *Chicago Tribune*, valiant champion of reaction. This paper says frankly that the restoration of the eight hour day was as "a reward to the Signalmen for their refusal to join the shopmen's strike last summer." It expresses the hope that similar action will be taken in the case of the Maintenance of Way and the Clerks. All over the country at the present time substantial bonuses are being handed out by the railroad companies to those individuals who betrayed their fellow workers by refusing to strike. Can it be that they are going to pass around a few of these bonuses to the organizations whose officials betrayed the shopmen much more dastardly than did the men who actually scabbed?

For many years past Wm. G. Lee, President of the Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen, has been

a curse to organized railroad workers. Movement after movement among them for better conditions he has wrecked with his reactionary conduct. To tell the story of his treason would be to recite the principal causes of all these defeats of railroad men. He has been a faithful representative of the companies.

But at last it seems that we are to be rid of him. Among those who know what's going on, it has long been an open secret that Lee was slated for a good job by the companies when his period of usefulness to them in the union had passed. That point is just about reached. He has nearly run his course. At the last convention of the B. of R. T. he was elected by only four votes, and the opposition against him is constantly growing. He dare not face another convention, so it is up to his masters to give him his reward now. Hence, the timely announcement that he has accepted the presidency of the Steigelmeyer Manufacturing Company, a \$10,000,000 corporation to manufacture automatic train control devices. No doubt Mr. Lee will prosper well in his new venture, with the support of the companies. Like his predecessor, Morrissey, he will get his Judas' silver. Good riddance to him, say we.

### How Lee Split the Unions

One of the most hopeful signs of the whole labor situation during the war time and the period afterwards, was the gradual drawing together of the sixteen railroad unions into one cooperative body. Under ordinary circumstances, the logical result of such an alliance was for it to eventually develop into a general railroad amalgamation. But the companies, viewing this tendency with great alarm, were able to break up the combination, tearing the unions apart from each other and reducing them pretty much to their primitive status of each one fighting its own battles. Wm. G. Lee was the principal figure used by them in this treacherous work.

Some of the moves made by Lee to wreck cooperation among the sixteen unions, are told in the *Colorado Labor Advocate* of a recent date, as follows:

"The trouble between Lee and the other organizations began with the appointment of W. L. McMenimen to the Railroad Labor Board. The sixteen organizations had agreed upon three men, Phillips, Wharton, and Forrester. The law provides that members of the Board shall be nominated by the railroad unions, but selected by the President of the United States. Lee went to a rump organization of 100 men on the Boston & Maine, so the story goes, and got them to nominate McMenimen. And, to the surprise of the sixteen big unions, Harding named the man nominated by the small group, ignoring the choice of the great body of workers.

"This was only the beginning of the breach. The fight came over the reduction in wages of 1921. The Trainmen had been kept out of the negotiations by Lee. Then the general chairmen met, July 1st. On July 3rd they repudiated Lee and voted to stick with the other Brotherhoods. For two days Lee refused to have anything to do with his committee or the other organizations. When the time approached for the calling of the strike, the leaders of the organizations involved met with the Labor Board. Only those leaders knew what the strike vote had been. That was the ace card that the men held. They were not to divulge that. Stone, of the Engineers, was picked as the spokesman for all the unions. He was to be the only man to talk for the unions. When the group filed into the meeting of the Board, they were seated by one of the Board men. Then Hooper said, "Well, we will ask you men some questions, beginning with this man,"— and he pointed at Lee who had been seated carefully at the head of the table.

"Lee, according to the story, promptly spilled all the information he had. The strikers' story was given away. Even the vote was told. Afterward the Labor Board announced there would be no further cuts in wages for the Big Four — and there have been none.

"The final break with the other leaders was said to have come after a secret meeting at which it was to be decided whether all railroad labor should go out with the shopmen. After that secret meeting, Lee is said to have told certain other leaders that there had been a dictagraph connected with the room in which the meeting had been held, and that there had been three copies made of all that was said. He is further quoted as saying that J. P. Morgan and Company, representing the stockholders, and the General Managers' Association, representing the operators, had the other two copies of the proceedings. The mysterious thing that must be found out is, how does it happen that Lee has such confidence of the railway owners that they give him one of their three copies."

### S. U. — B. R. T. Amalgamation Balked

The general calibre of the men to be found at the head of some of our organizations, as well as how little attention they pay to convention instructions, is well exemplified by the farcical amalgamation negotiations carried on between the presidents of the Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen and of the Switchmen's Union of North America.

At the 1922, Toronto Convention, of the B. of R. T., a resolution was adopted calling for the amalgamation of the B. of R. T. and the S. U. It specifically stated, "Inasmuch as the yardmen of this country are organized into two separate orders, which in the past has had a harmful effect, and their interests would be better served by uniting into a single and stronger organization, this Convention is in favor of making an offer to the Switchmen's Union looking to the merger of the two orders. Shortly afterward President Lee, "merely for your information," sent this

resolution to President Cashen. The latter wrote demanding further information. To this Lee said, "I am unable to give you any additional information other than contained in the resolution. . . . The only argument I remember presented to the convention by those supporting the resolution, was that in the interest of trainmen and yardmen, one organization only should be arranged for."

Taking his cue from Lee's deliberate sabotage of the amalgamation resolution, Cashen backed away from the proposition altogether, saying, "In the absence of a definite understanding as to the intent of this resolution, the Board finds itself in the position where it is unable to take action. It is our opinion that the intent of the resolution has for its end the absorption of the Switchmen's Union by the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen. This apparent intent is totally at variance with the fundamental principle on which the Switchmen's Union of North America is based." He then plumps for craft unionism complete. With such reactionary leadership, how can railroad men make any progress?

#### A Light in the Darkness

The one hope for railroad men and the one cheering prospect in the present welter of reaction, is the amalgamation movement centering

around the International Committee for Amalgamation in the Railroad Industry. This movement constantly takes on greater and greater scope. Everywhere the rank and file are waking up to its true significance.

At the famous amalgamation conference in Chicago, Dec. 9th and 10th, 1922, the International Committee was instructed to write to the presidents of all the sixteen unions, inviting them to participate in a general amalgamation convention. Only three have replied, Ryan, of the Carmen, Kline, of the Blacksmiths, and Fljzodal, of the Maintenance of Way. The latter alone endorsed the proposition. This lack of response has moved the International Committee to proceed to the next step in bringing about amalgamation. It is now taking a national referendum on the proposition among the 12,000 local unions of the sixteen Standard organizations. This will serve to still further arouse the rank and file to the necessity for amalgamation and to crystallize into action the sentiment already existing among them for this vital measure. Every militant in the railroad industry will do his utmost to make effective the work of the International Committee. Our unions must be remodeled, their reactionary leadership swept away, the workers given new hope and new ideals, and a general renovation in the labor movement brought about.

## The Unity Movement in Great Britain

By V. Brodzky

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THE British Trade Union Movement by means of amalgamation, federations and working agreements between unions has in the last few years been making steady progress towards complete unity of the working class.

In 1920 seven unions in the Metal trades were amalgamated into one union with a membership of 460,000. In the same year twelve other unions took part in nine amalgamations involving about 300,000 workers in seven different industries.

In 1921 and 1922 the rate of progress has steadily increased, the most important developments being the formation of the Transport and General Workers' Union with a membership of 300,000 by the amalgamation of seventeen unions.

During the same period two unions were amalgamated into the National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers, with a membership of a little over 200,000; and the latest and most recent amalgamation is that of three unions catering for general laborers, with a total membership of over 500,000. This last amalgamation

has just been completed, and a joint committee of the old executives is now in session drawing up a new constitution and selecting a new title for the union, which incidentally is the largest union in the world catering for general laborers.

Bigger developments and more rapid progress is expected in the next twelve months as a result of the General Council of the Trades Union Congress initiating conferences of groups of trade unions to discuss the possibility of amalgamation and closer unity.

The first of these conferences will be held in Manchester early in February, at which representatives of thirty-five unions in the engineering industry (workers in metal) will be present, representing a total of 800,000 workers. This conference will be followed almost immediately by a similar conference at Bradford of fifteen unions in the textile trade (other than cotton), representing about 200,000 workers.

Apart from the General Council's activity in bringing groups of unions together many in-