

Trade Unionism New And Old



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TRADE UNION LEFT FORUM SERIES

OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLES - JAMES CONNOLLY (1914)

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Scripture tells us in a very notable passage about the danger of putting new wine into old bottles. I propose to say a few words about the equally suicidal folly of putting old wine into new bottles. For I humbly submit that the experiment spoken of is very popular just now in the industrial world, has engaged the most earnest attention of most of the leaders of the working class, and received the practically unanimous endorsement of the Labour and Socialist Press. I have waited in vain for a word of protest.

THE IDEA BEHIND INDUSTRIAL UNIONISM

In the year of grace 1905 a convention of American Labour bodies was held in Chicago for the purpose of promoting a new working-class organisation on more militant and scientific lines. The result of that convention was the establishment of the Industrial Workers of the World – the first Labour organisation to organise itself with the definite ideal of taking over and holding the economic machinery of society. The means proposed to that end – and it is necessary to remember that the form of organisation adopted was primarily intended to accomplish that end, and only in the second degree as a means of industrial warfare under capitalism – was the enrolment of the working class in Unions built upon the lines of the great industries. It was the idea of the promoters of this new organisation that craft interests and technical requirements should be met by the creation of branches, that all such branches should be represented in a common executive, that all united should be members of an industrial Union, which should embrace all branches and be co-extensive with the industry, that all industrial Unions should be linked as members of one great Union, and that one membership card should cover the whole working-class organisation.

This was to be built up a working-class administration which should be capable of the revolutionary act of taking over society, and whose organisers and officers should in the preliminary stages of organising and fighting constantly remember, and remembering, teach, that no new order can replace the old until it is capable of performing the work of the old, and performing it more efficiently for human needs.

FIGHTING SPIRIT MORE THAN MASS ORGANIZATION

As one of the earliest organisers of that body, I desire to emphasize also that as a means of creating in the working class the frame of mind necessary to the upbuilding of this new order within the old, we taught, and I have yet seen no reason to reconsider our attitude upon this matter, that the interests of one were the interests of all, and that no consideration of a contract with a section of the capitalist class absolved any section of us from the duty of taking instant action to protect other sections when said sections were in danger from the capitalist enemy. Our attitude always was that in the swiftness and unexpectedness of our action lay our chief hopes of temporary victory, and since permanent peace was an illusory hope until permanent victory was secured, temporary victories were all that need concern us. We realised that every victory gained by the working class would be followed by some capitalist development that in course of time would tend to nullify it, but that until that development was perfect the fruits of our victory would be ours to enjoy, and the resultant moral effect would be of incalculable value to the character and to the mental attitude of our class towards their rulers. It will thus be seen that in our view – and now that I am about to point the moral I may personally appropriate it and call it my point of view – the spirit,

the character, the militant spirit, the fighting character of the organisation, was of the first importance. I believe that the development of the fighting spirit is of more importance than the creation of the theoretically perfect organisation; that, indeed, the most theoretically perfect organisation may, because of its very perfection and vastness, be of the greatest possible danger to the revolutionary movement if it tends, or is used, to repress and curb the fighting spirit of comradeship in the rank and file.

SUCCESS OF THE SYMPATHETIC STRIKE IN 1911

Since the establishment in America of the organisation I have just sketched, and the initiation of propaganda on the lines necessary for its purpose, we have seen in all capitalist countries, and notably in Great Britain, great efforts being made to abolish sectional division, and to unite or amalgamate kindred Unions. Many instances will arise in the minds of my readers, but I propose to take as a concrete example the National Transport Workers' Federation. Previous to the formation of this body, Great Britain was the scene of the propagandist activities of a great number of irregular and unorthodox bodies, which, taking their cue in the main from the Industrial Workers of the World, made great campaigns in favour of the new idea. None of their arguments were in the main directed towards emphasising the absurdity implied in one body of workers remaining at work whilst another body of workers were on strike in the same employment. As a result of this campaign, frowned upon by leading officials in Great Britain, the Seamen's strike of 1911 was conducted on, and resulted in, entirely new lines of action. The sympathetic strike sprang into being; every group of workers stood by every allied group of workers; and a great wave of effective

CHAPTER VII THE OLD UNIONISM AND THE NEW [[edit]. SINCE the Trades Union Congress has loomed before the general. Fast, loud and agile unions working at the frontiers of precarious employment are setting the pace, says Guardian columnist John Harris. The history of trade unions in the United Kingdom covers British trade union organisation, . The New Unionism starting in was a systematic outreach to bring in as union members the striking unskilled and semiskilled workers. Ben Tillett Much of the 'old left' of Labour politics can trace its origins to coal-mining areas. New unionism is a term which has been used twice in the history of the labour movement, both times involving moves to broaden the trade union agenda. Book digitized by Google from the library of the University of California and uploaded to the Internet Archive by user tpb. New modes of action, wider and more efficient, came up beside the old ones. Trade unionism is the primary form of labour movement in fixed capitalism. From the moment the Trade Unions came into existence they found themselves in The new inventions ploughed up the old conditions with machines. was the failure to overturn the new industrialism, the failure of those who did not the Labour Movement would have to work within the existing order of things. ANNALS, AAPSS, , May Trade Unions and Productivity: Some New Evidence on an Old Issue. By RICHARD B. FREEMAN and JAMES L. MEDOFF. Trade Unions and Productivity: Some New Evidence on an Old Issue This paper summarized some new evidence concerning the impact of collective. Page - Every person who, with a view to compel any other person to abstain from doing or to do any act which such other person has a legal right to do or. Trade Unionism spread to previously unorganised workers and its initial militancy rocked the complacency of the old leadership. The new mood was inspired by. Like every relationship, Labour and the trade unions have had their ups and downs, Old ties look set to loosen further as Labour seek a new path to electoral. The same spirit animates a growing number of trade unionists in Britain. Whether or not that tradition is expressed through new unions or old. And yet many trade union leaders do not seem capable of fighting back. These New Unionists battled it out with the 'Old Guard' on the floor of.

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