

THE AGITATOR

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Articles for publication should be written LEGIBLY on one side of the paper only.

THE AGITATOR does not bear the union stamp because it is not printed for profit. But it is union, every letter of it. It is printed and published by unionists and their friends for the economic and political education of themselves and their fellow toilers. Much of the labor is given free. On the whole it is a work of love—the love of the idea, of a world fit for the free.

Nothing is more disgusting than the crowing about liberty by slaves, as most men are, and the flippant mistaking for freedom of some paper preamble like a "Declaration of Independence" by those who have never dared to think or act. Emerson

SYNDICALISM IN FRANCE

III

Group Individualism

The C. G. T. is a highly decentralized organization, the organizations composing it having almost complete autonomy, being bound together only by the most general regulations. The individual syndicates in their bourses or federations reserve to themselves the full right of deciding when and how they shall carry on their fight against their employers. Besides making their own constitutions, charging what dues they wish, etc., etc., they can strike or remain at work, make or break contracts, just as they chose, even tho the majority of their fellow syndicates in their federation or bourse may decide on an opposite course. They refuse to be dictated to, as well by majorities of syndicates as by central committees, in these important matters. Their matchless solidarity results from a consciousness of their class interests, not from empty constitutional provisions or coercive central committees.

They obey majorities of syndicates only insofar as their less important co-operative undertakings, such as "sou du soldat," viaticum, payment of per capita tax, etc., are concerned. This principle of autonomy of the syndicates is so firmly established, that, except in cases of actual scabbery, it is almost impossible to expel a syndicate for the exercise of its autonomy. These statements are true only of the syndicates in the federations controlled by the direct actionists. Those controlled by the politicians are centralized and the syndicates, consequently, possessed of much less autonomy.

To become part of either bourse or federation a syndicate is required simply to pay its per capita taxes to conform to geographical and industrial lines and to support the obligatory co-operative undertakings. To become part of the C. G. T. it has but to fulfill the "triple obligation;" (a) be affiliated with its local bourse; (b) be affiliated with its national federation; (c) subscribe annually for at least one copy of "La Voix du Peuple." These conditions fulfilled the C. G. T., the Comfederal Committee, has no authority whatever over it.

The individual bourses and federations in their respective sections of the C. G. T. retain the same autonomy as the syndicates. Each reserves the right to transact its own affairs. They too are bound together by only most general regulations regarding per capita tax, etc.

The same autonomy extends to the two sections of the C. G. T. each being perfectly independent of the other.

This system of autonomous organization, which deprives central committees of legislative power and places this power in the syndicates where it rightly belongs, is being strongly encouraged by the direct actionists, who have long since learned the folly of power in the hands of central committees.

Equality of Organizations

Another manifestation of the group individualism prevailing in the C. G. T. is the system of group representation. In the forming of committees, conventions, etc., all organizations in the same category, regardless of their numerical strength, are given equal representation. For instance; in the formation of the general committees of the individual bourse each syndicate big and little, alike, is entitled to one delegate. This rule also holds good in regard to the federations, all the syndicates in a given federation furnishing one delegate each to its national committee. This does not apply to the centralized federations, which still use the system of proportional rep-

resentation. In the formation of the Bourse committee the same system is used: the smallest bourse in the country is entitled to the same representation as that of Paris, viz., one delegate.

On the Federal Committee the National Federation of Laundry Workers with 50 members, like the National Federation of Building Trades Workers with 85,000 members, has one delegate. Finally, the two sections of the C. G. T. are equal to each other each furnishing six members apiece to the three sub committees. This form of the "practical anarchy" of the C. G. T. is very displeasing to the politicians, who for years have faulted for the adoption of the system of proportional representation. Only in the payment of dues are the organization numerically considered, each paying according to its membership.

Dues

The C. G. T. (Confederal Committee) for its running expenses taxes each bourse one cent a year per member and the federations 1-2 cents a year per member. These bourses and federations in turn tax their syndicates which finally collect dues from their members. The taxes of bourses and federations on their syndicates vary according to the number of their benefit schemes. They usually amount to but a few cents per month. Dues in the syndicates vary on the same principle from 10c. per month up. The C. C. T. has a universal dues card, issued yearly. The dues stamp is in two sections, one section being bought by the syndicate from its bourse and the other from its federation to whom they are sold by the C. G. T. A free transfer between the unions is almost universal. Initiation fees, except in syndicates for centralized federations, are negligible.

Contracts

The contract system is not very well developed in France. The syndicates usually make their own contracts, the federations rarely doing so. Contracts are usually considered binding on employers only. To save their union breaking its contract often, the members resign and strike as individuals. After the end of the strike they rejoin it.

C. G. T. Conventions

The C. G. T. conventions are held every two years. Syndicates, bourses and federations, each send one delegate. **The syndicates alone are entitled to vote,** they being considered the superior organizations of the C. G. T. The bourses and federations have but a voice. The order of business is determined by referendum of the syndicates, three month prior to opening of the Convention. Delegates usually arrive instructed. The decision of the Convention is final, there being no general referendum.

Purposes of C. C. T.

According to its preamble the C. G. T. has for objects, "1st, The organization of the workers for the defense of their interests, moral and material, economic and professional.

2nd, It organizes, independant of all political schools, all workers conscious of the battle to be fought for the abolition of the wage system." This second clause was confirmed by the C. G. T. convention at Amiens, (1906) in a resolution containing the following passage: "The convention considers this declaration to be a recognition of the class struggle which, on the economic field, brings the workers to revolt, in opposition to all forms of exploitation and oppression, both moral and material, instigated by the capitalist class against the working class.

"In its daily work of conquest, syndicalism seeks thru the co-ordination of the workers efforts, the betterment of their conditions by the realization of immediate benefits, such as the shortening of the workday, increase of wages, etc. But this work is only one phase of the task of syndicalism. It is preparing for the complete emancipation of the worker, which can only be realized by the expropriation of the capitalists. It endorses the general strike as a means of accomplishing this end and considers that the syndicate, today the fighting group, will in the future be the producing and distributing group, and the basis of the social reorganization.

WM. Z. FOSTER.

MISSION OF THE AGITATOR

Misery and poverty are so absolutely degrading, and exercise such a paralyzing effect over the nature of men, that no class is ever really conscious of its own suffering. They have to be told of it by other people, and they often entirely disbelieve them. What is said by great employers of labor against agitators is unquestionably true. Agitators are a set of interfering, meddling people who come down to some perfectly contented class of the community, and sow the seeds of discontent among them. That is the reason why agitators are so absolute-