

# FOSTER WRITES TO METAL WORKERS' CONFERENCE

FROM his prison cell on Hart's Island (800 Fordham St., New York City), William Z. Foster writes greetings to the National Metal Workers' Conference, in Youngstown, Ohio, June 14 and 15. Foster is the general secretary of the Trade Union Unity League, to which belongs the Metal Workers' Industrial League, the caller of the Youngstown conference. He is serving a three year sentence, imposed upon him along with Amter, Minor and Raymond, all members of the committee elected by the 110,000 unemployment demonstrators on March 6. His message to the steel workers, whom he led in the greatest strike of their history in 1919, is as follows:

Comrades: Your conference is of the utmost importance. Undoubtedly it will lay the basis for a great industrial union of workers in all branches of the metal industry—steel, automobile, electrical manufacturing, agricultural machinery, etc. The situation is ripe for such an organization.

The metal workers are suffering from wage cuts, speed-up and every form of intense exploitation and oppression. The industrial crisis has paralyzed the industry and hundreds of thousands of metal workers walk the streets unemployed. And this situation is worsening rapidly. The industrial crisis is deepening and its destructive features are spreading. The coming winter will show a huge increase in unemployment; slashing wage cuts will be made and new drives initiated to further speed up the toilers in the shops.

The workers will fight back. Of this we may be sure. The many small strikes in various sections of this basic industry show their developing fighting spirit. The union you are building must be strengthened at once to organize and lead these impending great struggles of metal workers. The conference must launch a great organizing campaign. This is its most elementary task. Steps must be taken to establish shop committees in all metal plants, this vast campaign to culminate in the near future in a national convention at which your union will be formally set up.

## A. F. L. Not For Workers.

The fascist A. F. of L. cannot and will not fight for the interests of the steel workers. Its betrayal of the great steel strike in 1919, its criminally incompetent and corrupt steel "organizing" campaign in 1923, its recent fake drive to unite the auto workers, together with its general strikebreaking policies, are sufficient proof of this.

The decadent Amalgamated Association of Iron and Tin Workers, headed by steel company stool-pigeons and under-cover men, is the rotten symbol of A. F. of L. unionism in the metal industry. The so-called socialist party-Muste progressives in the A. F. of L. are only a blind for the A. F. of L. reactionaries. Their basic policies are the same. They have nothing to offer the metal workers but betrayal. All these labor traitors must be fought aggressively, while at the same time their followers must be won for the new union. The steel workers, together with the whole body of metal workers, need imperatively the new, revolutionary unionism which your conference is building up.

## Enlist Rank and File.

In the organizing campaign which must follow your conference, and which should be based primarily upon the steel mills, you must enlist the active cooperation of the rank and file. Great efforts should be made to organize the young workers into youth sections and to draw them into the work, and in a leading capacity, they are the best fighting elements in the working class. Also the women, who are playing an ever more important part in your industry, require to be united. But above all, the Negro workers must be organized. They are decisively important in all sections of industry. The history of A. F. of L. unionism has been one long betrayal of the Negroes. The new union must militantly fight for and with the Negroes. Its success will depend very much upon how it meets this vital question.

The organization campaign following the National Conference must be based upon definite demands of the workers. The conference should work up a concrete program, concisely

stated, of the actual demands of the metal workers; against wage cuts, against the 12-hour day and for the 7-hour day and 5-day week, against the speed-up, for the release of political prisoners, etc. Such demands must be widely popularized among the armies of metal workers.

## Fight Unemployment.

The very greatest emphasis must be laid upon the fight against unemployment. The interests of the employed workers are identical with those of the unemployed, and all must make a common fight. The union must join with its entire forces in the struggle for unemployment insurance, the shorter work week, etc. It should utilize all its connections to build up the great mass convention of unemployed in Chicago, July 4-5, and actively organize the unemployed workers. Only by the keenest solidarity and militancy can the working class make headway against the hostile combination of employers, government, and fascist labor leaders. Hence the union you are forming must from the outset realize its position as a vital organization that the Trade Union Unity League is building up. The new union must actively support the 50,000 membership drive of the T. U. U. L. Every member should become a reader of the T.U.U.L. central organ, Labor Unity. The conference should take active steps for setting up the closest relations with the railroad workers and coal miners' organizations of the TUUL for joint action.

## It's a World-Wide Fight.

The new union must also take its place in the great world labor organization, the Red International of Labor Unions. The conference should elect its delegates to the vitally important Fifth Congress of the R. I. L. U. It should establish the closest working relations with the metal section of the R. I. L. U., and popularize the RILU widely among the metal workers generally.

Your conference should also pay close attention to the developing war situation. The metal industry plays a key role in munition making. The capitalists are making special efforts to militarize it in every respect in preparation for war. The conference should take a sharp position against the coming imperialist war, warn and unite the workers to fight it, and seek to secure organization in the key plants.

The metal workers' conference, while devoting itself closely to the organization of struggle around the workers' immediate demands, must not lose sight of the elementary fact that only by the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of a workers' government can the basic evils afflicting the working class be eliminated. This requires the emphatic development of the everyday fight into a broad political struggle. The Soviet Union, with its glorious achievements in building Socialism despite the attacks of a hostile capitalist world, is the inspiration and model of the revolutionary workers everywhere in the United States, as well as in revolutionary China and India. The new union must realize the wonderfully inspiring effect upon the workers of the great successes of the Soviet Union, and utilize this fully in organizing them. Above all, it must unite these working masses to defend the Soviet Union in the threatening war against it by the imperialist powers.

The need for organization is urgent among the metal workers. You have to face the most gigantic and ruthless combinations of capital in all parts of the industry, such as the United States Steel Corporation, General Motors Company, International Harvester Company, General Electric Company, etc. These great combines stop at no act of terrorism to increase their exploitation of the workers. The government everywhere is their tool. In fighting such powerful organizations, the new union of metal workers has a big task. But if it follows the line laid down by the R.I.L.U. it can make a successful fight. It will build a great labor organization which can defend the metal workers interests now, and half prepare the way for the final overthrow of capitalism by the working class.

The other members of the unemployed delegation here in this jail—Comrades Minor, Amter, and Raymond—join with me in sending revolutionary greetings to your conference and in wishing it the greatest success.