

## CHAPTER III

### LEFT WING UNIONISM AND THE RISING TIDE OF OPPOSITION

THE calling of the national convention and the decision to launch a separate national union marked one turning point in the organization of the ladies' garment workers. Heretofore the work of all opposition forces had been centered upon attempting to forge a united front of struggle within the I.L.G.W.U. and to transform that organization into a militant union. Now they proceeded to set up an organization of their own.

#### *Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union*

The five-day convention which gathered in New York on December 28, 1928, met in an atmosphere of determination for bitter and relentless struggle. Conditions in the trade were approaching a new low ebb. In the cloak trade the 40-hour week was openly scoffed at by the bosses; wages were beginning to go down; unofficial piece work had virtually replaced the week work system; the organization of the cloak workers, which had reached 80% when the expulsion campaign was inaugurated, had fallen to a point where, according to a report of the Impartial Chairman, Mr. Ingersoll, 50% of the shops were completely non-union, 43% were only nominally union shops and only 7% were union shops in the strict sense of the word. Similarly, only 10% to 15% of the dress trade was organized. In other crafts a similar situation prevailed.

The convention call, signed by Louis Hyman, Chairman, and Rose Wortis, Secretary, of the National Organization Committee, was issued on November 9, 1928, and 167 dele-

gates came from New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Chicago and Los Angeles.

In the organization of the new union the shop was made the basic unit—the final putting into practice of the long-fought-for shop delegate system. Moreover, the organization of all trades was unified by a central coördinating body. The furriers, for example, were invited to join the new organization and upon their acceptance another step was taken toward an important left-wing goal—amalgamation of all needle trades unions. In addition, all workers in a given shop were organized within a single industrial union, instead of being divided, as in the case of the I.L.G.W.U., into craft locals—such as cutters, operators, finishers and pressers.

*Industrial Union's Record*

On January 1, 1934, the N.T.W.I.U. held its fifth anniversary. In the five years of its existence it had weathered many storms. It had faced the police, the courts, the International officials and the employers—all openly collaborating to destroy it. However, it had never failed to fight militantly in countless major and minor struggles in the interests of the workers. It had, at the same time, never abandoned its efforts to unite all needle workers in one union based on the class struggle.

At the end of 1934 there were within its ranks 25,000 workers—men and women who through five long years had been in the forefront of the struggle for militant class unionism. It had, in addition, the open support of tens of thousands of needle workers who, in order to get a job, found themselves forced into the I.L.G.W.U. and other A. F. of L. unions.

Toward the end of 1934 the Trade Union Unity League, with which the Industrial Union was affiliated, decided that strenuous efforts should again be made to unite the workers into a single union in each trade. It therefore requested its affiliated unions to make overtures to their corresponding

A. F. of L. unions for merger into one organization within the A. F. of L. and to abandon their separate existence wherever this became possible. The Industrial Union, in the interests of such unity, acted on this suggestion. By the summer of 1935 its custom tailors section had successfully merged with the Journeymen Tailors Union of America (A. F. of L.). In some cities the Custom Tailors Industrial Union received charters from the Journeymen Tailors, while in others existing locals were merged. We shall also see how the dress department of the Industrial Union, despite considerable obstacles placed in its path, achieved unity within the I.L.G.W.U.

At the time that the latest unity offers were made, the union consisted of six affiliated sections, which all prepared to abandon their separate existence as fast as unity with the A. F. of L. should become possible. These were the Fur Dressers and Dyers Industrial Union, the Bathrobe Workers Industrial Union, the Knitgoods Workers Industrial Union, the Custom Tailors Industrial Union and the Dressmakers Industrial Union. These were all closely knit with the parent body through a Joint Council. The strong unionization achieved under the leadership of the Industrial Union among the bathrobe workers, custom tailors, knitgoods, fur pointers and fur retail workers (fields in which virtually nothing existed two or three years before) bear strong witness to what honest, militant leadership can achieve for the workers.

In the field of fur manufacturing and dyeing the Industrial Union at the time of the recent merger of its fur section with the A. F. of L. union, virtually controlled the trade—having in its ranks at least 90% of the workers. Among the fur dressers it had about 50% of the workers. Among the bathrobe workers it had practically 100% of the organized workers, although the trade is largely open shop outside of New York City. Within New York City it had the overwhelming majority of all workers in the fur trade.

In the custom tailoring fields, the Journeymen Tailors

Union had been practically liquidated when the Industrial Union entered and called a general strike in New York in 1933. With the advent of the Industrial Union the employers attempted to reestablish the old union and sent between 100 and 150 workers back into its ranks. In addition, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers has some of the small downtown New York stores but virtually all of the real custom tailors in the legitimate plants belonged to the Industrial Union when the merger was effected with the Journeymen Tailors. Similarly, there was virtually no unionization in the knitgoods trade when the Industrial Union began an organization campaign in New York in 1932. This led to the calling of a strike in 1933 which achieved among other things the 35-hour week. Then the International was called in by the employers with the result that many of the shops held by the latter union to-day were given to it by the employers. It has about 3,000 members in New York and the Industrial Union another 2,500—out of 8 to 10 thousand workers in the knitgoods trade.

One of the very good indices of union effectiveness is the degree of opposition which it evokes from employers as a result of consistent activity in the workers' interests. How the I.L.G.W.U. operates in the knitgoods trade and the attitude the employers take toward the two unions in the field was illustrated in the discussion preceding the general strike of the trade in the summer of 1934. "In the event of a strike in the knitted outerwear industry," commented the *Daily News Record*,<sup>1</sup> "it is freely predicted that in so far as the Metropolitan Knitted Textile Association is concerned, the strike will be of short duration. Just what the compromise would be that could bring the local employer association and the joint International . . . setup to terms cannot be so easily foreseen, but *it is felt that no conditions will be pressed that would place local manufacturers at a disadvantage* as compared with their out-of-town associates. . . . A subsidiary but equally important issue, in the view of manufac-

turers, is the possible elimination of the Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union, Communist-led organization, which secured contracts last fall with a number of the largest shops."

There was no Industrial Union strength among the cloak-makers and although dressmakers were organized in the Industrial Union when merger within the I.L.G.W.U. was achieved, that section of the Industrial Union was very weak. The bulk of the dressmakers were in the International, the Industrial Union having some individual shop agreements but no collective relations with the employers' associations. In every Industrial Union shop, however, there was strict observance of the minimum scale or above, whereas the International officials had been permitting a gradual wilting away of wage and hour conditions, reorganizations and the like. With the reentrance of the militants into the organization this practice will be stopped, for the militants have learned how to put mass pressure upon their officials and the employers simultaneously.

By concrete achievements the Industrial Union shattered the theory that during a period of crisis the working class must retreat, because at such a time workers cannot strike and win their demands. During the worst of the crisis—from July, 1931, to September, 1932—the Industrial Union in New York alone conducted 1,978 shop strikes, involving 20,737 workers. In the dress industry weekly increases of from \$1 to \$3, in some instances \$5, were gained for 8,000 workers. In the 1931 fur strike from \$3 to \$15 gains were obtained for close to 3,000 workers and in the 1932 fur strike the gains totaled \$16,641 per week for 2,643 workers.

Alone among the needle unions, the N.T.W.I.U. came out unreservedly in opposition to the NRA. This position was clearly stated by Ben Gold, National Secretary-Treasurer of the organization:

The years of the crisis have undermined the faith of the masses in the almighty American capitalism. The long unemployment



and the misery of the masses has shattered the confidence of the masses in the policy of class collaboration practiced by the treacherous bureaucrats of the A. F. of L. and the Socialist Party. The militant labor movement has begun to win over new followers and members. The NRA is aimed chiefly to revive the faith of the masses in the capitalist system, to strengthen the right-wing leadership and to smash the revolutionary movement. . . . We have to wage a deeper, sharper and bolder struggle against the NRA.<sup>2</sup>

This policy of struggle against the NRA and the winning of demands based on organized workers' strength was carried on wherever the Industrial Union had power—at the time of the merger negotiations chiefly in New York, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles and San Francisco.

*Causes of Opposition Within the I.L.G.W.U.*

Within the International during the past six years the administration has increasingly worked in collaboration with the bosses and the federal and local governments. Inevitably a new rising tide of organized opposition has developed within the union.

The organized employers and the union bureaucracy have become virtual partners—each in mortal fear of the organized resentment of the workers. The International officialdom would have long since given way before a rank and file leadership were it not for the support it receives from the bosses, while the latter would never have been able to continue their present degree of exploitation and make their continuous inroads upon the standards of the workers were it not for the aid of the union's officers. Neither can afford to be at odds with the other. Pressure from below makes a pretense of activity essential, however, and from time to time they made some show of quarreling with each other. But they are merely shooting blank cartridges—with "registration" stoppages and prearranged settlements.

Thus, in 1929, the New York cloakmakers were called

out to the accompaniment of great publicity in the capitalist and official union press. "New York Cloakmakers Strike Paralyzing Whole Industry—28,000 Cloak Workers quit work on Tuesday at Union's call—Response Exceeds All Expectations . . . [etc.]," ran the headlines in *Justice*, official International organ.<sup>3</sup> And, indeed, the workers downed tools with determination and courage, crowding the strike halls with great enthusiasm. But, as usual, the International officials retreated. The "strike" called on July 2 was ended in a little over a week, when a three-year peace was signed with the help of Lieut.-Gov. Lehman, to whom again the union appealed instead of relying on the picket line to win its demands.

The new contract said nothing about wage or hour schedules. The great "victory" of which the union boasted consisted of another adventure with a "Commission" appointed at the suggestion of the then Gov. Roosevelt, which S. Klein of the Industrial Council called the "covenant of the trade" and which was "charged with the duty of checking up the production and abating the production of garments by non-union or substandard channels and enforcing the observance of standards established by this agreement throughout the industry."<sup>4</sup> The union was to be saved the trouble even of doing its own organizing, shops being handed to it on a silver platter by beneficent employers who further gave the union the right "in keeping with the employers' belief that the worker owes allegiance to the union that has helped him" to visit the shops twice a year to see that workers had paid their dues.<sup>5</sup>

It is small wonder that such a settlement was signed "at a ceremony in the Governor's Room at City Hall [and that] Acting-Governor Lehman and Mayor Walker affixed their signatures to the document as witnesses."<sup>6</sup>

The New York dress strike of 1930 was another such adventure in class coöperation. Before it was called the President of the International, Benjamin Schlesinger, had a

brotherly conference with Mayor Walker who assured him that "police will protect pickets in the dressmakers' strike."<sup>7</sup> Announcement of the date of the strike was made by none other than the notorious Police Commissioner, Grover Whalen, who further assured Schlesinger that the police would be neutral.<sup>8</sup> Representatives were sent to the shops of the Dress Manufacturers Protective Association, which had contractual relations with the Industrial Union and where higher standards prevailed, asking them to send their workers to the International and promising "to sell them labor cheaper if they agree to throw out the 'lefts.'"<sup>9</sup>

Conditions in the industry had grown so miserable that 35,000 again struck immediately upon issuance of the strike call on February 4. But that very day Governor Roosevelt was on the job. He summoned the officials on both sides to a conference at the Executive Chamber at Albany on February 7th, and all of them readily agreed that Lieutenant Governor Lehman should mediate the issues involved. Lehman, a Wall Street banker close to the clothing industry, was thus given control over the very bread and butter of thousands of workers. Again, six days after the strike was called, New York's dressmakers were returned to the job with a settlement which contained much verbiage about "stabilization of the industry," and the "100% union shop" but which said not a word about raising pay scales. While the 40-hour 5-day week was supposed to be granted, a joker in the agreement permitted work on eight Saturdays in the year and, as a further sop, unemployment insurance was recognized "in principle"—in which state it has remained to this day. Most important of all from the union standpoint, thousands of dressmakers were compelled to register with it before going back to work—and of course to pay dues. After this strike open shop conditions were as widespread as ever.

### *United Front Again Rejected*

In 1932 both the dress and cloak agreements of the I.L.G.W.U. expired. In both trades the bosses instigated a merciless wage-slashing campaign. The prices for labor on garments (cloaks were supposed to be on a week-work basis, but in point of fact bootleg piece work was the rule) had been reduced by as much as half. Conditions were such that the workers faced starvation even when employed, while speed-up and long hours increased with resultant mass unemployment.

The leaders of the International had another opportunity to achieve united strike action for the correction of these abuses. A United Front Committee of International members and representatives of the Industrial Union served demands upon the International leaders for united action of all workers—those in open shops, Industrial Union shops and International shops—against low wages, long hours and discharges and for better conditions.

The I.L.G.W.U. officials again stabbed the move for unity. "The whole 'united front committee' maneuver is only a petty scheme" said Local 22 of the dressmakers in rejecting the overtures,<sup>10</sup> and rank and file workers who were too insistent upon the united front were even barred and ejected from the strike halls.

As a result the strike, when called, was a farce and a fraud from the beginning. As one observer wrote:

The writer has been in close contact with every general strike since the one that affected the cloak makers in 1910, and doesn't recall any single labor trouble that has been a source of so little concern to the employers as this projected strike of the dress makers.<sup>11</sup>

And although it was contended that "there is no evidence of any understanding between the union and the contractors' association, prior to the walkout"<sup>12</sup> Mayor Walker confirmed the rumor that he and Dudley Field Malone, representing



the employers, and Morris Hillquit, attorney for the International, had conferred before the strike was called. The union which would not confer with workers in the trade had no compunction about conferring with capitalist politicians. The strike accomplished nothing and greater chaos than ever prevailed after it ended.

The I.L.G.W.U. officials during the course of this strike consistently rejected every offer made to it by the Industrial Union for a unified and united strike. The Industrial Union called a simultaneous walkout and won increases ranging from \$2 to \$5 for the approximately 8,000 dressmakers which it led in this movement. It was not satisfied with such concessions but found itself unable to maintain the strike after the I.L.G.W.U. workers were sent back.

The cloakmakers' movement of the same year could not be dignified with the word "strike." *Women's Wear*<sup>18</sup> merely referred to it as an "organization stoppage." Once again Mr. Lehman, who was Acting-Governor of New York State at the time, called all factors involved to an open conference. The union officials were delighted to avert a strike and accepted a \$5 a week wage cut instead. The stoppage of a few days which followed was merely a form of racket to collect dues. Workers were called to strike halls, forced to surrender their union books, and sent back to work only upon the payment of a sum amounting in most cases to \$25. This from starving workers who had just been "awarded" a \$5 weekly cut.

#### *The I.L.G.W.U. Opposition*

Obviously, the workers were having the lesson driven home to them that their leadership was not representative of workers' interests. Policies of friendship, peace and harmony with the employers and their associations were reducing the rank and file to destitution.

The members are in open revolt against this sort of "unionism." They want to fight the employers and are

seeking ways and means of doing this in the face of strong-arm methods, blacklisting and other such practices employed by the administration against those who dare to voice resentment and protest.

Throughout the entire I.L.G.W.U., rank and file oppositions are springing up. At the 1934 convention an open declaration was printed and issued to the delegates by these groups urging a radical change in present policies and the adoption instead of a militant class-struggle program. It pointed out, in part, that:

The earnings of the dressmakers during the past season have already been reduced 30 and 40%. . . . You must get an answer to why, in the last season, more than 1500 complaints from the workers for non-payment of the minimum wage scale and other violations of the agreement were permitted to rest in the office of the "impartial" chairman, thus sacrificing thousands of dollars of the hard-earned money of the workers. . . . In the recent period, officials of our Union have done away with every semblance of Union democracy and have deprived the workers of their most elementary rights [details follow]. . . . A particular object for these persecutions are the Left Wing elements of the I.L.G.W.U. who are carrying on an uncompromising struggle against the class collaboration policy of the officials. . . . The policy of the class struggle and strikes advocated by the Left Wing is the main weapon to force the bosses to concede better conditions, as against the policy of depending on the good-will of the bosses and government.

There followed a 13-point program for the regeneration of the union, but consideration of this program was effectively blocked by the officials.

#### *Strength of the Opposition*

Do as the administration will, these opposition groups keep growing. In the 1934 and 1935 elections in dressmakers local No. 22, the left wing slate polled an average of nearly 40% of the votes cast. In 1933 the left wing was completely victorious in cloak local No. 9, electing B. Cooper as manager and an entire left wing administration.

In Local 9, however, the International was again up to all of its old tricks and the tactics of 1926 were repeated on a smaller scale. For daring to prepare militantly for a strike in the trade and undertaking a mass campaign for week work, trumped-up charges were drawn up by the General Executive Board against the administration of the local just before the 1934 elections. Charges of "dual unionism" were testified to by former contractors and officials of the local who were hated and despised by the membership and who, after a verdict of "guilty" was rendered, had the administration of the local handed over to them by the G.E.B. Subsequently the left wingers were barred from office for a two-year period and under such circumstances a farcical "election" was conducted to cover up this usurpation of power.

The ridiculousness of the charges of disloyalty to the International is best indicated by the added strength which the left-wing administration of Local 9 brought to the International during its brief period of control. Hundreds and later thousands of members rejoined the local and began to attend meetings. Membership of the local was increased from 2500 to 5000. The indebtedness of \$47,000 which had been inherited from the previous administration was largely paid off. Wage increases for the workers were won. And most important of all, the support and confidence of the members was enjoyed in full measure and real rank and file interest in the affairs of the union was revived.

But the union officials are fast learning that the opposition cannot be disorganized or scared by their tactics. In the closing weeks of 1934 the left-wing candidates in Local 1 (cloakmakers) secured 40% of all of the votes officially "counted." In Local 9, 35% of the votes were counted for a left-wing and progressive slate which had united against the administration. In Local 1 two opposition candidates were elected to the Executive Board.

### *The International To-day*

As a result of the reactionary policies which its leaders have followed consistently ever since its formation, the I.L.G.W.U. entered the years 1932 and 1933 in a bankrupt and demoralized condition. This had reached a point where it could no longer be withheld from the membership.

"There was little glamor or exuberance in the members of the [General Executive] Board gathered from all centers of women's garment making," wrote *Justice* in November, 1932. "Our organizations . . . have trimmed their sails to suit the storm. . . . They are fighting on the defensive wherever they are pressed too hard by the employers. . . . There was no holiday mood about this gathering of the leaders of the I.L.G.W.U. . . . We are ready to retrench still further in order to make our line compact and less open to attack."

Confronted with this state of affairs, the advent of the NRA proved an undisguised blessing. "The terms of the cloakmakers code obtained in Washington early in August have sent a thrill throughout the labor world," commented the administration.<sup>14</sup> "What followed is a matter of too recent history to require recording," it continued. "The mediation of the NRA [in the dress walkout] the swift signing of the agreements, the perfectly organized return of the dressmakers to the shops and the unionization of the dress industry on a scale never paralleled before, are some of the rapid-fire developments."

The International swallowed the NRA hook, line and sinker. Morris Hillquit flew to Washington with the union's cloak industry brief. Grover Whalen, NRA administrator for New York City, intervened in the dress stoppage to obtain employer recognition of the organization. "In the past half year a near revolution has occurred in industry in America," commented the administration editorially in *Justice*. "As if by a magic wand they [thousands of new members] had been swept into Union shops," it observed. "The organized labor movement in the United States whole-



heartedly supports the National Recovery Act and its administration," continued David Dubinsky, now I.L.G.W.U. president.<sup>15</sup>

In October, 1933, the G.E.B. meeting in Washington claimed 175,000 members. To-day it boasts that within a comparatively short period its dressmakers' headquarters have been able to move from crowded and dingy offices to a "Palace of Labor." It boasts of a huge treasury. And when the abandonment of the NRA was threatened, Dubinsky spoke at a huge mass meeting at Madison Square Garden in May, 1935, in favor of its continuance.

In characteristic fashion the I.L.G.W.U. officials attributed the union's prosperity to the "blessings" of the NIRA instead, as was actually the case, to the strike action of the workers and the fear among the employers of a swing to the left if the I.L.G.W.U. was not granted some concessions. The dressmakers' strike of 1933 found the workers in a militant mood and ready to struggle bitterly against the conditions by which they were oppressed. The Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union called a strike at the same time and over 10,000 workers joined in the picket line and other strike activities of the left-wing union. The employers appreciated the tone and temper of the masses and acted on the advice of Grover Whalen to recognize the I.L.G.W.U. and grant liberal concessions or else be faced by a rapid defection of the workers to the Industrial Union.<sup>16</sup> It was this threat and this actual struggle of the workers that won better conditions in 1933.

But with a leadership committed to a policy of class peace, conditions of the workers are again declining rapidly. The NRA, even before its abandonment, began showing openly its true character. With wages, hours and working conditions slipping rapidly, the I.L.G.W.U. membership is loudly demanding action, and this the present administration refuses to take.

### *Rôle of the "Progressives"*

Following the expulsions from the I.L.G.W.U. and the formation of the Industrial Union, those militants who remained in the older organization were slow in getting their opposition work reorganized and taking advantage of the mass resentment which the official policies were provoking. They were destined to pay dearly for their lateness in this work. It furnished the opportunity for a fraudulent opposition to capitalize this discontent.

In an effort to stem the rising tide of revolt, the administration has brought into the leadership of the International a so-called "progressive" element. These people are the followers of Jay Lovestone, who had been expelled from the Communist Party. Within the I.L.G.W.U. their leader is Charles Zimmerman, now manager of Local 22.

It is the task of these people to throw a cloak of "progressivism" about the machinations of the corrupt bureaucracy. It is their job to obtain control of the growing discontent and to divert it into harmless channels.

Zimmerman had been expelled from the I.L.G.W.U. in the "pogrom of 1926." But he made peace with the officialdom and in 1933 was brought into the leadership of Local 22 when the old guard could no longer cope with the masses of that local. At that he was able to obtain office only by the slim margin of 70 votes. There is a clause in the constitution requiring membership in the organization for two consecutive years prior to eligibility for office. This clause is rigidly enforced against militants who rejoin after having dropped out or after being expelled. It was waived in Zimmerman's case, however, in order to enable him to run for the Executive Board.

In their job of sowing dissension and of dividing the opposition sentiment of the workers, the "progressives" have demonstrated lack of consistency, sincerity or honesty of purpose.

Thus, when these people helped to organize the Needle



Trades Workers Industrial Union in 1929, Zimmerman became one of its first officers. When expelled from the Communist Party, they almost immediately organized an opposition within the new union under the name of the "Needle Trades Workers Unity League." However, even then this group maintained the correctness of the policy of forming the new union, and Zimmerman in his minority report to the General Executive Board of the N.T.W.I.U. in 1930 chided it for laxness and "failure to bring forward a policy or to take any steps in the direction of winning over the workers of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union for the Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union."<sup>17</sup> And he maintained at the same time, "We hold that it was correct for us to organize a new, militant Industrial Union—the Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union. Our union was organized as a result of the determined struggle against the splitting tactics of the reactionary bureaucracy. . . . When Sigman, through his mass expulsions split the union, the masses refused to recognize these expulsions and followed our leadership. As a result of this struggle our union was born."<sup>18</sup> Later, however, when the I.L.G.W.U. officials accepted them back into the fold these same "progressives" pictured the formation of the Industrial Union as a cardinal crime—as an act of "dual unionism"—and urged the abolition of the left-wing union and its return to what they termed the "main stream" of American labor, the A. F. of L. When the dress section of the Industrial Union did propose unity in October, 1934, and offered to return to the I.L.G.W.U., these very people put every possible barrier in the path of the left-wing workers' efforts to return in a solid group with full union rights and privileges. The result was that it was not until April, 1935, that the Industrial Union members were admitted into the International and even then this was not consummated on the basis of an exchange of union membership books in one organization for the other. Instead the Industrial Union members had to join as individuals, pay

initiation fees and accept the limitations placed upon new members, such as the two-year membership period required before being permitted to run for office which had been waived when Zimmerman rejoined the organization.

Zimmerman parades as a Communist. He does not spare left phrases when talking to the masses. Before his election to office he spoke loudly about unity and about class struggle unionism, about true strikes and struggles, against class collaboration. Many believed him and voted him into office.

Having quelled the opposition temporarily with his left phrases, Zimmerman and his followers are now numbered among "the boys." They march proudly by the side of the bosses and Dubinsky. They are the outstanding slanderers of the rank and file oppositions and were the bitterest opponents of any move for joint struggle or unity with the Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union. They still talk of "fighting the bureaucrats" and the like—but always in the abstract. Never do they actually name Dubinsky or the other corrupt officials in their union.

The Zimmerman administration was party to a secret clause in the 1933 dress agreement, granting the employers the right to "reorganize" their shops. Local 22 failed to inform the members of the existence of such a clause in the agreement. Throughout the trade, wage cuts are being instigated at every turn but during the period of the NRA many workers' complaints which the union has a right to settle were being referred to the code authority by these "progressives." Every tactic that the I.L.G.W.U. officials use against militant left-wingers is now employed by this very group which calls itself "left."

At the 1934 convention Zimmerman shed the last of his "opposition" garments before the Dubinsky machine. With good cause could Dubinsky point to him with pride and observe that despite so-called "political differences," they are to-day "loyal comrades and brothers of our union," and that as between "Zimmerman and Antonini, Zimmerman and

Perlmutter, Zimmerman and Max Cohen . . . it has been possible to cement them together for one great cause, for one great purpose."<sup>19</sup> Lovestone was invited to address the gathering and was given a rousing ovation by the officials—the best testimonial to his degeneracy. Moreover, Zimmerman was rewarded for his services to the clique and made an international vice-president.

The opposition in Local 22 (of which Zimmerman remains manager) is an opposition to these "progressives"—now indistinguishable from the machine they pretend to fight.

*The Industrial Union Offers Amalgamation*

On September 6, 1934, and October 23, 1934, two significant communications were addressed by the Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union to the officials of the I.L.G.W.U. The first related to amalgamation of the fur unions, a field in which the Industrial Union was all-powerful. The second concerned the dress unions where the industrial union was weak.

The document relating to the furriers read, in part, as follows:

We have learned from the press that at your meeting today you will consider a proposal for the absorption of the so-called International Fur Workers Union into the I.L.G.W.U. . . . If through your contemplated action with respect to the absorption of the so-called International Fur Workers Union you seek to add your official efforts to all the other numerous efforts to club the fur workers into an organization chosen for them by the fur manufacturers, we can assure you, in the name of the thousands of fur workers, that your efforts will be just as futile and just as harmless to the interests of the fur workers as all of the others. . . .

If, however, your contemplated action with regard to the fur workers, by any chance aims at amalgamation, you will find the fur workers and the Fur Workers Industrial Union and its membership have never for one moment ceased striving for the genuine amalgamation of all needle trades unions on the basis of a militant working class trade union program of action. There is

no more appropriate time than the present for giving serious thought to this question. . . .

Therefore, consistent with the policy of our union, the hopes and aspirations of our members as well as the members of all the needle trades unions, we propose that if you really seek to achieve amalgamation, a committee of your G.E.B. meet with a committee of our G.E.B. for the purpose of working out ways and means as well as the basis for genuine amalgamation.

The communication relative to the dress unions pointed out:

The dress bosses have joined the vicious open shoppers of other industries in a drive to reduce the living standards and smash the organized power of the workers. In this, the dress bosses are receiving support and coöperation from the Dress Code Authority. . . . Our union is convinced that the insufficient resistance offered to the attack of the dress bosses tends to discourage many members of the I.L.G.W.U. and increases the danger of the successful attacks by the bosses against the organized power of the dressmakers. This situation, therefore, impels us to propose again the unification of all dressmakers in one union, for the purpose of combating the attacks of the bosses. . . .

We believe that complete unity of all dressmakers in one union and the adoption of a militant program will most effectively mobilize the dressmakers to stop the attacks of the bosses. . . . We declare that the Dressmakers Industrial Union is ready to unite with and become part of the dressmakers section of the I.L.G.W.U. on the basis of the I.L.G.W.U. recognizing the transfers of our members, granting books and full membership standing to all members of the Dressmakers Industrial Union without any discrimination.

The communication relative to the furriers never received a response. Later another offer was made to the International Fur Workers Union, with results which we shall examine in another chapter. In the dress situation slow progress was made.

The proposals made by the Industrial Union were presented for consideration to a meeting of 4,000 dressmakers, members of both unions, on October 22, the day before they



were transmitted. After discussion they were enthusiastically accepted without a dissenting vote.

Instead of embracing the proposal readily, the I.L.G.W.U. officials grudgingly and reluctantly yielded step by step before the demands of their members. In a statement to the press on November 19, 1934, answering the N.T.W.I.U. proposal, President Dubinsky of the I.L.G.W.U., instead of welcoming the opportunity offered to create one united organization in the industry, concerned himself largely with invective against the Industrial Union. He refused any information as to whether the Industrial Union workers would be exempted from the large entrance fees charged by some I.L.G.W.U. locals; he neglected to make it clear whether its membership would receive full membership rights upon entering the organization or be regarded as new members required by the constitution to wait two years before enjoying full rights—such as eligibility to run for office. The one important step forward indicated in his statement was the declaration, “they will be taken in and considered regular members without any discrimination on account of their beliefs, principles or Party affiliations.” The needle trades story would have been considerably different had such a principle held in 1925.

A later statement printed in *Justice*, January 1, 1935, as a declaration of the Executive Board of Local 22, headed by Zimmerman, was again extremely ambiguous and added little to the struggle for unity. “No dressmaker will consider seriously for a moment,” it stated, “granting special premiums to those who publicly announce that they want to come in for purposes of disruption.”

It wasn't until April, 1935, as we have noted, that the Industrial Union dressmakers were allowed to slowly filter in and were issued books in the International. Even then, however, they were not taken in as a body but were treated individually, and as new members.