

## The Cigarmakers Convention

By Tom Clark.

The drift to industrial unionism cannot be stopped. The chaos now ruling industry by which one union scabs on the other, and all of them are beaten by the bosses, has opened the eyes of all classes of workers. They see, or are beginning to see, that unless they are able to build a compact organization, embracing all the workers of an industry, they will be unable to fight the bosses.

The strike of the cigarmakers which took place last year, was lost because only a small portion of the cigarmakers are organized, the result being that the market is flooded with goods made in open shops. And these scab cigars and tobacco products are smoked by union men, who pride themselves on being union men! It was clear, therefore, that something had to be done to organize the whole industry.

This step was taken at the instance of the membership of the Shop Institution organization of New York and vicinity, which called a special convention of all tobacco workers. The convention met in New York on Dec. 4 and was attended by about 150 delegates.

There were assembled all kinds of fighters—and fighters are needed in this industry. When one considers whom and what the tobacco workers have to fight—the tobacco trust and several powerful concerns;—when one considers that the trust recently declared a dividend of 55 per cent, and, in spite of the high prices still being charged for tobacco goods, is trying to reduce wages; and when one considers that workers are being discharged without any appeal, it becomes clear that only a powerful organization can remedy matters. Of course, there is the International Cigarmakers' Union, a unit of the A. F. of L., and typical of the A. F. of L. But the spirit of it is such that there are five times as many unorganized workers as organized.

Hence something had to be done. The advocates of the Shop Delegate system immediately recommended an industrial union—and **INDUSTRIAL UNIONISM** was the slogan accepted by all the delegates. It was merely a question of the form. Here were men and women who had passed through many a strike and knew the necessity of solidarity, but could not yet find the basis for unity.

And this could be attributed to various causes. There were I. W. W., Syndicalists, Anarchists, Communists, Socialists and conservatives at the convention, and no type of union seemed able to satisfy all. In fact, the most violent discussion arose when a provisional preamble and constitution were presented. The preamble stated that the struggle of the workers is a political as well as an industrial one. The class conscious tobacco workers recognize the class struggle, the fight between workers as a class and the bosses as a class, and will fight for the overthrow of the capitalist class by industrial and political means. The constitution merely provided for an industrial union, without for the moment specifying the type.

These two propositions were bitterly fought by the Spanish workers, who are splendid class-conscious fighters, and may be depended on in any struggle. But as syndicalists and anarchists, they would not accept the struggle on the political field, declaring that it could all be taken care of on the industrial. Furthermore, they would not bind themselves to a centralized form of industrial unionism, demanding shop autonomy.

A new industrial union was born at the convention, the "Amalgamated Tobacco Workers of America". Workers in other unions and all the unorganized, numbering more than 150,000 men and women, are to be invited to join the new body. The immediate demands are work by the week; 44-hour week; uniform wages; even distribution of work during times of depression; shop committees and committees for education and propaganda.

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"I rush out of my house,  
And drag you in,  
You foul thing:  
Reeking with sweat and filth,  
The putrid slime of all the dirty world.  
I devour you through the eyes,  
Incorporate you into my life:  
Incorporate you into our composite life.  
Why do I lust after scandal, and you.  
Man's failures, miserable delinquencies, tragic  
horrors—and you.  
Why can't I rest until I have brought you in?  
You foul thing!"