

THE OFFICE WORKER

Official Organ of the Office Employees International Union of the A. F. of L.

No. 2

WASHINGTON, D. C., FEBRUARY, 1945

Launch Office Employees International Union at Historic Session

FUTURE BRIGHT FOR NEW UNION

Cincinnati.—“There is no organization chartered by the American Federation of Labor that was ever launched under more auspicious circumstances and with a brighter future than this union of office workers.”

So declared AFL President William Green as he conferred international union status upon the Office Employees International Union.

Presenting the charter to Paul R. Hutchings and J. Howard Hicks, who were later unanimously elected President and Secretary-Treasurer, President Green said he believed the union could not only become the largest affiliated with the AFL, but the largest single union in the world and pledged all assistance “to make your organization a million members in the near future.”

Historic Occasion

Earlier in his address, President Green stressed that the occasion was an historic one and likened the delegates to the pioneers who settled and developed this nation.

“I want to congratulate you,” he went on, “you who represent these splendid federal labor unions of office workers established in different sections of the country. You have performed a wonderful work and those associated with you, those whom you represent, those who have worked with you and those of the American Federation of Labor who have worked with you.

“I am conscious of the difficulties encountered in the campaigns which were launched in the different communities among the office workers. Apparently it has been difficult for the office workers to comprehend the importance of mobilizing their economic strength into one solidified movement. So many of them have depended upon what they could consider their individual, personal outstanding qualifications and for that reason they have hesitated to join with others. But they have learned and are learning the lessons, perhaps slowly, but surely—that after all, they occupy the same position in our economic structure as do the wage-earners in every other calling. There is no difference.

Solution of Problem

“The voice of one cannot reach the council chambers of the directors of the great corporations, but when they are mobilized and the voice of one becomes the voice of all and the voice of all becomes the voice of one, then they can make their influence felt. And so, as a result of that, we have been making office workers conscious of the necessity to become organized along with other wage-earners in order to improve their standards of

life and living. It is the only solution of the problem.”

The AFL chief explained what the international union means to the locals, which have been func-

Cincinnati, O.—The Office Employees International Union was launched here January 8 by representatives of local unions of office workers in the United States and Canada after they received the international charter from AFL President William Green with the assurance that the federation will continue to watch with interest and assist in the development of its newest autonomous affiliate.

Green Presents Office Employees Charter



Cincinnati.—AFL President William Green presents an International Union charter to the newly established Office Employees International Union. Accepting the charter are J. Howard Hicks, Portland, Oreg., left, and Paul R. Hutchings, Washington, D. C., center, who were unanimously elected Secretary-Treasurer and President, respectively, of this newest International Union of the American Federation of Labor.

tioning under the rules and laws of the Federation, saying: “Now you will be blended into a national union and in that national union you will function under the direction of that union. But the membership of your locals will shape the policies of that union.

Complete Autonomy

“You will be an autonomous union. Even the American Federation of Labor cannot interfere with the exercise of your authority. You yourselves will determine policies, you will decide in democratic fashion how and in what way your union will be administered. You will elect your own officers. You will hold them responsible. You will formulate your own constitution. That constitution will represent the wish of the majority of the members of your organization once you are united into an international union.

“Now, when the organization is formed today and you are launched, then all the federal unions will surrender the federal charters to the federation and accept new charters from the newly created Office Employees Union. We will fix a time and date when the transfer

Immediately following acceptance of the charter the delegates turned to the adoption of convention rules, the seating of the delegates and the prime task—drafting and adopting the constitution, which was followed by the election of officers.

Paul R. Hutchings of Washington, D. C., was elected president and J. Howard Hicks, of Portland, Oreg., was elected secretary-treasurer. Hutchings and Hicks had previously served for 2½ years as the executive officers of the International Council.

Vice Presidents Chosen

Ten vice presidents were elected as follows: J. O. Bloodworth, Jr., Tampa, Fla.; A. R. Carson, Sheffield, Ala.; R. M. Daugherty, Toledo, O.; Mildred Erickson, Seattle, Wash.; George P. Firth, Pittsburgh, Pa.; Alice Holz, Milwaukee, Wis.; C. C. Newell, Vancouver, Wash.; L. G. Nygren, Minneapolis, Minn.; Frank F. Randall, Oakland, Calif., and C. A. Stafford, Port Arthur, Tex.

The purpose and aims of the new International Union as expressed in its constitution dedicates and devotes the organization to the tremendous task of organizing the office and clerical workers in Canada and the United States coming under its jurisdiction. In the organization of these workers the International Union will strive to render all possible aid, assistance and guidance to all of its local unions and their members. Every effort will be exerted to bring about the establishment of collective bargaining agreements, which agreements should provide more adequate compensation for the services which office workers perform, shorter hours of employment and proper pay for their overtime and holiday work. It will also strive to develop the maximum possible job security and assurance of advancement opportunities, as well as adequate annual paid vacation and sick leave allowances.

Unique Provisions

The constitution contains numerous unique and forward looking provisions designed to allow for and bring about the maximum growth and development of the union among the workers of its trade. It was published in full in the January issue of “The Office Worker.”

Greetings and a message from Secretary Ornburn of the AFL Union Label Trades Department were brought to the convention by Miss Lily McAlinden. She was introduced by AFL Organizer Ellsworth C. Bundy of Cincinnati, who served as presiding officer at several of the important sessions. Frank P. Fenton, AFL Director of (Continued on page 3)

UNION WINS IN NLRB ELECTION

Milwaukee.—Local 16456, scored a decisive victory in the bargaining election conducted by the National Labor Relations Board for the office employees of the Milwaukee Transport Co., according to Alice Holz, financial secretary of the local and a Vice President of the International Union.

(Continued on page 3)

of your property and your charters can be made in an orderly and systematic way.

“In conventions of the American Federation of Labor your international union will be represented by as many delegates as the membership of your locals will permit, as provided by the laws of the federation.”

In conclusion, he pointed out that the AFL and the international had formed a common bond of fraternity, obligated one to the other.

“We will stand by you and with you in all your work and in all your activities,” he emphasized.

THE OFFICE WORKER

Official organ of the
OFFICE EMPLOYEES
INTERNATIONAL UNION



PAUL R. HUTCHINGS, *President*
J. HOWARD HICKS, *Sec.-Treas.*
1110 Thirteenth Street N.W.
Washington 5, D. C.

PUBLISHED MONTHLY

Entered in the Post Office at Washington,
D. C., as second-class mail matter.



Reproduction by the Labor Press of any or
all of the material herein contained is not
only permitted but wholly desirable in the
interest of workers' education.

Subscription Price, \$1 a Year

Workers' Rights Safeguarded In Insurance Bill

Washington, D. C.—Although the bill exempting insurance companies from the anti-trust laws was passed by the Senate, the rights of employes of these concerns under the National Labor Relations Act and the Wage and Hour act are safeguarded by a clause inserted as a result of the efforts of the Office Employees International Union, the Industrial and Ordinary Insurance Agents Council, W. C. Hushing, chairman of the AFL legislative committee, Lewis G. Hines, AFL national legislative representative and AFL Associate General Counsel Herbert A. Thatcher.

The protective clause states that the act shall not be construed to effect in any manner the application of these labor laws to the insurance business. Office and clerical workers as well as other workers employed by insurance companies doing an interstate business are thus safeguarded in their rights to organize and bargain collectively as provided in the National Labor Relations Act, and also maintain the benefits of the Wage and Hour Law.

AFL Triumphs In Telegraph Vote

Washington, D. C.—Sweeping victories were scored by the American Federation of Labor in the recent nation-wide elections conducted among Western Union Telegraph Co. workers by the National Labor Relations Board. The AFL unions were chosen as collective bargaining agents by a majority of nearly 2 to 1 over the rival CIO unions in all except the district embracing metropolitan New York.

Pay Increases for Drug Firm Workers

Oakland, Calif.—Through negotiations by Local No. 20744 office workers of the McKesson & Robbins Co., drug concern, have received retroactive increases in wages ranging from \$5 to \$10, according to Frank F. Randall, vice president of the International Union.

Charter Convention Delegates Get Outline of Label Trades Activities

Cincinnati. — One of the highlights of the charter convention of the Office Employees International Union was the message of I. M. Ornburn, secretary of the Union Label Trades Department of the AFL, which was delivered to the convention by Miss Lily McAlinden, secretary to Mr. Ornburn and a member of Office Employees Union No. 11773 of Washington, D. C.

"The chief aims of the department," she explained, "are to publicize the union labels, shop cards and service buttons and to promote the sale of union label goods and the patronage of union services. In connection with these activities we are called upon to assist in many problems concerning labor unions, but our constant goal is to popularize the official emblems of organized labor and the principles for which they stand.

"These symbols of union label goods and union services are the free trademarks of the American Federation of Labor. Through intelligent buying we are endeavoring to maintain what labor unions have obtained through collective bargaining."

"The best way to maintain American labor union standards," she emphasized, "is to buy only from firms that display the union label, shop card or service button—the emblems of democracy in industry. If we are to retain fair wages, shorter hours and better working conditions, it is necessary for us to buy only goods that are manufactured under union conditions and patronize only those establishments that employ members of service unions."

Hundreds of thousands of pieces of literature and posters are put out each year by the department

Portland Local Asks Affiliation

Portland, Ore.—By unanimous vote, members of Local No. 16281 at their regular meeting January 16 went on record instructing the officers to affiliate the local with the Office Employees International Union at the earliest possible date, according to Irving Enna, secretary-treasurer of the local, who was a delegate to the convention.

Employees of Labor Bureau Join Union

San Francisco.—The majority of employes of the National Labor Bureau have designated Local No. 21320 as their bargaining agency and negotiations for improved wages and other conditions will be under way soon.

Negotiations were recently completed with Gensler Lee, Butler Brothers, San Francisco Bay Toll Bridge, Hermann's Market, Coffin-Redington and Cooperative Drug, according to Fred Miller, business representative of the union. The agreements have been submitted to the WLB for approval of wage adjustments.

The dispute between the union and South & Gilbert has also been placed in the hands of the WLB for consideration. The United Engineering Co. dispute has been submitted to the Shipbuilding commission of the WLB.

and in addition there are radio features, and news releases and cartoons for labor papers to keep in the fore the union labels and the principles for which they stand. The new edition of the Union Label Catalogue-Directory will be ready for distribution soon. It contains a reproduction of every emblem, label and service button and a list of manufacturers using the labels.

The department is also engaged in many war activities and Miss McAlinden revealed that the recent Victory Recipe-Menu contest won high praise from government officials.

One of the greatest undertakings has been the campaign for free union label cigarettes for fighters overseas. Over half a billion cigarettes have been contributed by the workers.

"From all battle areas our unions have received letters of gratitude from our fighting heroes," she said. "Unquestionably, these voluntary gifts have built good-will for organized labor among our forces in every war zone.

In conclusion, Miss McAlinden said, "We must continue to do everything possible to see that when wartime industries are reconverted into factories making civilian goods that the union label is displayed on all union-made goods. The fundamental method of obtaining the display of union labels, shop cards and service buttons is to write a provision into each contract definitely stating that the union label shall appear on all goods and that the shop card or service button shall designate all services.

"Just as Old Glory, the American eagle and the Statue of Liberty are the symbols of our great republic, which is setting an example for peoples of all nations, union labels, shop cards and service buttons are the emblems that set standards for wage earners all over the world who are striving to obtain industrial justice and economic freedom."

Union Wins Another Round of Fight With Chicago Insurance Concern

Chicago.—Local 20732 has won another round of its long battle with Polish National Alliance, an insurance firm which has been fighting for years against the efforts of its employes to organize and to improve their wages and working conditions.

Twenty-four workers, who were compelled to work overtime and on Sundays without compensation from October 1938 to October 1941 received checks totaling \$6,840 as ordered by the federal court where suit was instituted under the Wage and Hour Act.

In 1942 the company was found by the NLRB to have engaged in unfair labor practices and to have needlessly prolonged the strike which workers were forced to call. At that time it was ordered to recognize and bargain with the union and reinstate all strikers.

The Alliance, instead of complying, went to court, challenged the NLRB ruling and claimed it was not subject to the Wagner act. The

Sign Agreements With Real Estate, Paper Box Firms

New York.—Local 23076 announced that it has secured collective bargaining agreements for the office and clerical workers of A. Fleisig Sons, paper box manufacturer, and the Ancowitz Sons real estate firm.

Included in the agreement with Fleisig Sons are holidays with pay, vacation with pay, sick leave with pay and hiring through the local. Minimum wage rates are also established, thereby putting a floor under wages not only for the present, but for the postwar period as well. In addition, the agreement specifies that in case of lay-offs the last employe hired will be laid off first.

The real estate company signed up only after many months of negotiations and two hearings before the state labor relations board. The pact embodies such conditions as 15 days sick leave with pay, 11 paid holidays a year, maternity leave, 2-week paid vacation after 1 year's employment and 3 weeks after 5 year's employment. Hiring through the union is also specified.

Drive to Unionize Unorganized Begins

Portland, Oreg.—Energetic efforts to extend unionization and its benefits to the unorganized office workers in the Portland area is being pushed by Local No. 16281. At a recent meeting of the local, the employment of two organizers to augment the present staff was authorized and they are to be in the field by the middle of February.

The local announced that employes in the office of the Archdiocese of Oregon have been unionized and negotiations are under way for a collective bargaining agreement.

The first war bond sold in 1945 by the Portland Labor Temple bond booth went to Clyde Clement, a business representative of the union.

NLRB was again upheld and the company's contention with regard to the Wagner act was knocked out when the U. S. Supreme Court subsequently ruled on the case.

Despite this, the Alliance has been stalling on back wages for reinstated workers, who have considered the possibility of instituting contempt of court proceedings for failure of the Alliance to fully comply with the court's order.

HUTCHINGS ON RADIO

Washington, D. C.—The establishment of the Office Employees International Union was discussed on the radio by President Paul R. Hutchings. He spoke from WTOP on the "Labor News Review" conducted by Albert N. Dennis and the oldest labor program on the air.

The new International, Hutchings stressed, will strive to bring the benefits of trade union organization and collective bargaining to all office and clerical workers.

FDR ASKED TO ACT ON 'FREEZE'

Washington, D. C.—An AFL committee, headed by President William Green, conferred at length with President Roosevelt at the White House on key labor problems affecting the war effort and the postwar future.

The principal topic of discussion was the AFL demand for scrapping of the Little Steel wage formula. The last AFL convention directed Mr. Green to convey its position on this issue to the President. He took with him on the visit to the White House Secretary-Treasurer George Meany and Vice President Harry C. Bates.

The labor delegation told the President that the wage freeze is beginning to hamper war production and complicate manpower shortages in low-wage industries.

They also warned that failure to adjust wages now in realistic relationship to higher living costs would dry up purchasing power in the postwar period and retard recovery.

Another powerful plea presented to the President was for the lifting of minimum wage levels, particularly among white collar workers and government employes who have been afflicted by static incomes during a period of inflationary price rises.

It was reported that the President made it clear that he has come to no decision as yet with respect to the Little Steel formula as he is awaiting a report on this subject from the National War Labor Board. This report, when submitted, will first be referred to Stabilization Director Vinson for an opinion as to whether adjustment of wage rates would force further price increases. The White House position has been that wage increases cannot be permitted when they result in higher prices.

Pending manpower legislation and rumors regarding a successor to Secretary of Labor Perkins are other subjects of deep concern to labor but it could not be learned whether these matters were discussed at the White House meeting.

Warns Employers On Wage Cutting, Union Smashing When War Is Over

Washington, D. C.—Employers making plans to slash wages and smash unions after the war were warned by Frank P. Fenton, AFL director of organization, that by such methods they will be burying the system of "free enterprise" which they now glorify.

"If the initiative of private industry is sufficient to provide jobs for all who want to work, well and good," he said. "The American worker prefers it that way. But if the initiative of industry spends itself in reducing its own markets by competitive wage cutting and by any such 'open shop' drive as characterized the period after the last war, then the workers will turn to their government—and demand and get a program of government-financed public works big enough to fill the gap."

Fenton added that if employers return to the tactics they used after World War I then "the capitalistic system is in grave danger of crumbling."

"Business has the responsibility of not only talking about free enterprise; it must also act as if it believes in free enterprise," he declared. "Business statesmanship would require that it be in the forefront of the battle for a sound social security system and stable labor relations. Genuine free enterprise cannot really exist in our complicated industrial society without them."

"Also, strong and responsible unions are indispensable parts of free enterprise. Sound business leaders must recognize this fact immediately and not seek to destroy the labor movement—because to do so would be planting the seed of their own destruction."

Fenton insisted this country cannot afford to leave the issue of full employment to business alone.

"We must learn to wage peace with the same vigor we have used in waging war," he asserted.

Steps need to be taken now to give workers assurance they will have jobs after the war, Fenton maintained. "Speeches and syn-

thetic morale building programs" won't do the trick, he said; concrete moves must be made to reduce the "hazards of unemployment dislocation."

Among these moves, he contended, should be a national system of adequate unemployment benefits; funds to pay for the relocation of stranded workers when war production tapers off; action by the War Production Board to permit reconversion of war plants to civilian output at the earliest possible moment.

Manufacturers were warned, too, that they will not save themselves by playing off veterans against workers. Fenton claimed that most servicemen understand their future security lies in safeguarding the labor movement, protecting seniority rights and fighting for full employment.

Vote to Affiliate With International

Minneapolis.—Members of local No. 17661 voted to affiliate with the Office Employees International Union at their meeting January 16 after receiving a report on the charter and constitutional convention in Cincinnati from L. G. Nygren, business representative of the local and a vice president of the International Union, who represented the local at the convention. The executive board of the local was instructed to take the necessary steps to secure a local union charter from the International.

Union Chosen by Phillips Workers

Borger, Tex.—By a substantial majority, office employes of the oil refinery of Phillips Petroleum Co. have selected Local No. 23740 as their collective bargaining agent in an election conducted by the National Labor Relations Board.

Negotiations will be started soon for an agreement with the company in which it is hoped to secure improvement in wages and working conditions, according to C. A. Stafford, Vice President of the International Union, who together with AFL Organizer J. W. Park will assist in the negotiations.

of living higher than ever before known. We cannot be content no matter how high that general standard of living may be, if some fraction of our people, whether it be one-third, or one-fifth, or one-tenth, is ill-fed, ill-clothed, ill-housed and insecure."

The board, the labor group said, "was assigned to one sector of that substandard battle front, but so far has carried on the battle in only a half-hearted manner."

The statement also recalled that the President, in his executive order on wage stabilization, had authorized the board to approve increases to eliminate substandards of living.

"A number of attempts," they said, "have been made to get the board to consider the actual cost of a minimum standard of living, but these attempts have so far availed nothing."

COURTS WALLOP ANTI-UNION ACTS

Washington, D. C.—The United States Supreme Court dashed the hopes of the Christian-American Association and other labor enemies when it held that the Texas anti-labor law, requiring the registration licensing of organizers, was unconstitutional.

Justice Wiley Rutledge, who wrote the majority opinion, held that "a requirement of registration in order to make a public speech would seem generally incompatible with an exercise of the rights of free speech and assembly."

His opinion made clear that solicitation of membership, included in the speech involved in the case at issue, was an inseparable incident of the occasion and of all "that was said and done."

The 5 to 4 decision knocks the props out of the Texas law and probably will result in the invalidation of several other state anti-labor laws modeled after the Texas pattern and inspired by the Christian-American Association.

The State Supreme Court of Colorado ruled in a decision hailed as a victory for labor that two sections of the so-called "labor peace act" of 1943, requiring incorporation of labor unions, are invalid.

It also declared inoperative sections making a strike unlawful unless authorized by a majority vote by secret ballot of the union involved, and making such a vote a legal contingency in strike issues.

LAUNCH INTERNATIONAL

(Continued from page 1)

Organization, presided at the opening sessions.

Opening of the convention was preceded by the dissolution of the International Council of Office Employees Unions, which organization and its affiliated local unions played a vital role in the birth of the International Union. During the 2½ years of its operation, the Council served as the spearhead and clearing house of all matters affecting the more than 150 local unions which continued to operate as directly chartered unions of the AFL.

WIN NLRB ELECTION

(Continued from page 1)

The office employes, by a heavy vote, selected the union as bargaining agent in place of an "independent" organization, which had represented the group since 1937. A total of 102 votes were cast and of these 75 were for the union, 23 for the "independent" and 4 for neither union.

The local has been conducting an organizational campaign among the transport workers for the past 2 months, and was instrumental in postponing an all-union shop election which the "independent" sought to have conducted by the state board for the transport office employes. The transport company is a subsidiary of the Wisconsin Electric Power Co. whose office employes are still represented by the "independent."

At present, the transport office employes are making necessary preparations for drawing up a contract to be submitted to the company, and have elected stewards and bargaining committees.

72-Cent Minimum As General Rule Demanded by Labor Members of WLB

Washington, D. C.—The labor members of the National War Labor Board submitted to the full board a resolution which would establish 72 cents an hour as the straight-time hourly pay rate "below which any rate shall be considered substandard."

They charged that the board for almost 3 years had refused to attack this problem in "forthright fashion."

Under the terms of the labor group's resolution, any employer could get board approval to grant wage rises up a rate of 72 cents an hour. In disputes, the board would not necessarily order a 72-cent minimum in all cases.

Under present policy, employers may grant wage increases up to a 50-cent rate without asking board approval.

In a statement, the labor group said that "evidence submitted to the board indicates that, in order to maintain even the barest minimum

standard of living, an employe should receive no less than 72 cents an hour."

The statement declared that the board had "evaded the issue (of substandard rates) and sought to circumvent or postpone an adequate solution by creating wholly unsatisfactory administrative stop-gaps." It added:

"The board has persisted in this conduct despite presidential assurances, despite powers granted in statutes and executive orders, despite its own brave words that action would be taken to meet the problem of eliminating substandards of living. It is late indeed, but not too late, for the board to act courageously and effectively."

The statement quoted President Roosevelt as telling Congress last January, "It is our duty now to begin to lay the plans and determine the strategy for the winning of a lasting peace and the establishment of an American standard

Pictorial Highlights of International Charter Convention



1



2



3



4



5



6

1 Irving Enna, chairman Credentials Committee
 2 Clifford A. Jackson, chairman Rules Committee
 3 Convention picture of delegates and guests.
 4 President Green with former International Council Executive Board named on International Union charter, Lorraine S. Rhodes, George P. Firth, President William Green, L. G. Nygren, Ethyl M. Williams, Mildred Erickson, Alice Holz, Howard J. Coughlin, J. Howard Hicks, E.

5. Fritts, Paul R. Hutchings, and Frank F. Randall.
 5 Some delegates during convention session.
 6 J. Howard Hicks, chairman Constitution Committee. Seated: Frank P. Fenton, AFL Director of Organization, and Ruth Wilkie, convention reporter.
 7 Paul R. Hutchings, secretary Constitution Committee.
 8 Vice Presidents C. A. Stafford and Mildred Erickson with delegate Shirley Jacobs.



7



8