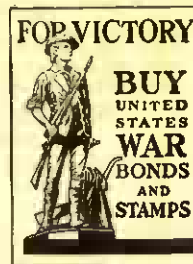


The Office Employees Letter

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April, 1944

INTERNATIONAL CHARTER PROGRESSES

A conference was held in Washington, D. C. on April 7 between President Green and the resident officers of the American Federation of Labor Executive Council and officers of our International Council. The purpose of the conference was to discuss jurisdictional lines preparatory to the issuance of an International Union charter to our International Council.

The meeting was scheduled as a result of action taken by the American Federation of Labor Executive Council at its January meeting in Miami.

It will be recalled that the October 1943 convention of the American Federation of Labor at Boston unanimously adopted the report of its organization committee on the subject of an international charter for office employes. The report and recommendation of the organization committee was made on a resolution introduced by the Washington State Federation of Labor, which requested the convention to go on record in favor of the granting of an international charter.

The organization committee, under Chairman W. C. Doherty, president of the National Association of Letter Carriers and a vice president of the American Federation of Labor, recommended concurrence in the purpose of the resolution and further recommended "that the president and the Executive Council proceed with the granting of an international charter for office employes at the earliest possible moment, and that the president and Executive Council render all possible assistance in the construction of a constitution, and otherwise."

The committee's recommendation on this subject was approved by the convention without a dissenting vote.

The progress which has been made toward the establishment of an international organization for our trade since the Seattle 1941 convention of the American Federation of Labor has indeed been most gratifying.

In July 1942, in accordance with the action of the 1941 convention, President Green called a conference of all directly chartered locals of our trade which was held in Chicago, and at which time our International Council of Office Employees Unions was established.

FROZEN WAGES

Every office worker knows that it costs a lot more to live today than it did three years ago. Secretary Meany of the AFL, as a member of the President's Cost of Living Committee, estimates that living costs on the whole are up 43.5% since January 1941.

But the War Labor Board has set the "Little Steel Formula" which allows only a 15% wage or salary increase. This formula was set in the "little steel" case (independent steel companies) to cover the rise in living costs up to May 1942. The board then applied the formula to all workers.

This formula means lower living standards for the 25,000,000 office, factory, store and other employes who are paid by the hour or the week.

May 1942 was the date when OPA "froze" retail prices. But the trouble was—prices didn't stay frozen. Ten months later (March 1943) AFL members came with a strong plea to the board; living costs had risen 7%; workers with their wages frozen could not maintain living standards; it was high time to change the Little Steel formula. But the public and industry members of the board turned them down.

A few days later (April 8) the President by executive order took away the board's power to change the formula and made 15% the nationwide ceiling for wage increases.

After 10 months, with further price rises, AFL Labor Board members again petitioned for a break in the iron wage ceiling; again they were turned down. Then a special War Labor Board panel heard AFL complaints in 3 crowded days of hearings, April 4-6, 1944.

Federation leaders flocked to Washington from north, south, east and west. In a packed hearing room, Secretary Meany led off with a carefully documented statement. He showed that the basis of stabilization was to maintain the peacetime living standard of American workers, but the Little Steel formula makes that impossible. This causes "bitterness and a deep, dangerous sense of injustice.

Our workers . . . are the core of the democracy for which we fight . . . We must bring wages in balance with higher costs of living."

Vice President Woll showed that at today's prices it takes a wage or salary

BOWLING NEWS

The National Federation of Post Office Clerks are now in first place having won two games from the Malloreay Squad who were in the lead.

Helen Downey of Ransdell, Inc., rolled a 381 set to take high individual set for the season. Her games were 131-130 and 120, which is excellent bowling. Mrs. Downey is also carrying second high average. Keep it up Helen!

Our bowling season is nearing the close, and before a next report is made, the winners will have been determined. Why not come to Hi-Skor Alleys and see some of these last games? They should be very interesting.

JACKPOT WINNER

Sister Gertrude Breslin, employed at Machinists' headquarters, was the lucky winner of the \$2 in War Savings Stamps at the March meeting.

of \$1.20 an hour (or \$48 for a 40-hour week) to support a family of 4 in health and decency. Even a bare subsistence living costs \$32 a week or 80c an hour, and 85% of factory workers get less than \$1.20. Salaries of office workers average (nationwide): Stenographers \$30, file clerks \$22, switch board operators \$25, junior typists \$23. Industry can afford to pay higher wages and salaries. Profit margins have increased since 1941.

"The Little Steel formula is unfair and unjust . . . It is an iron barrier to remedying injustices in the wage structure. We cannot wait longer" to correct it.

Watch the papers for the War Labor Board panel decision on the AFL hearing.

**NEXT
REGULAR MEETING
Tuesday, May 2, 1944
8:00 P. M.
Chantilly Room
HAMILTON HOTEL
Bring Your Dues Book**

W. R. Probey.....	President
E. W. Zeigermann.....	1st Vice President
Ernest H. Hinkins.....	2d Vice President
Robert Greenwood.....	3d Vice President
Helen H. Link.....	Financial Secretary
Elizabeth McNulla.....	Recording Secretary
Esther G. Smith.....	Treasurer
Carol Beauchamp.....	Guide
Frances O'Donnell.....	Guardian
W. R. Probey.....	Business Representative

CHARTER FOR GROWTH

By BORIS SHISHKIN

In about three months our Office Workers unions will meet in a constitutional convention to form their own full-fledged International Union under a charter to be granted them by the American Federation of Labor. This charter is to be a charter of rights as well as responsibilities. The rights are those of democratic self-government, of self-reliant determination of our own policies and procedures, of marshaling in our own way the wills and efforts of thousands of our fellow-workers throughout the land to the achievement of goals they are free to set for themselves.



SHISHKIN

The exercise of these rights imposes exacting responsibilities. Foremost of these is the responsibility toward the nation. As an organized group of citizens we must always make sure what we do accords with the common good of the entire community. Equally important is our responsibility toward democracy. Scrupulous observance of truly democratic procedures within our own ranks is the prime essential of sound growth and enduring strength of our union.

As a new international union we will owe a special responsibility toward the past achievements of the trade union movement. Many of the basic rights, standards and principles affecting us as workers must not be taken for granted because they seem widely accepted today. Others who have gone before us have won them for us over generations of service, struggle and self-denial. In this the American Federation of Labor has given us a unique inheritance—a sense of direct continuity in the militantly constructive tradition of American trade unionism. In days to come our past and future gains will be challenged and fought. It will be our turn to help defend the trade-union heritage and enrich it with our own gains.

Our final major responsibility is toward the workers in other occupations and

OFFICE WORKERS' PLIGHT REVEALED

The plight of the "20,000,000 Forgotten Americans," the white-collar workers who are trapped between rising prices and lowered incomes, is discussed in the *American Magazine* for May, 1944, by Senator Elbert D. Thomas, U. S. Senator from Utah, and chairman of the Senate Committee on Education and Labor.

Senator Thomas, who along with Senators Pepper, Tunnell, LaFollette, and Wherry recently completed an investigation of the white-collar workers' problems, reports that he has testimony which shows that 20,000,000 Americans and their dependents are living as best they can on incomes that have not risen appreciably since Pearl Harbor.

"While their incomes have been frozen, their taxes have increased, they have bought War Bonds, they have contributed to war charities, and their cost of food, clothing, and shelter has gone up."

It is interesting to note that this article comes as a result of the investigation at which members of Office Employees Union 11773 testified. Figures and quotations from the address of Boris Shishkin are contained in this article. As reported in last month's Letter, the members of the Education Committee of our local, the officers of the International Council, and many of our members attended this hearing.

It is encouraging to note that the truth about the white-collar workers is getting the attention it should have so that the office worker's contribution to the war effort on the home front is placed before the minds of the American public.

AFL HOLDS CONFERENCE ON POSTWAR PLANNING

The American Federation of Labor held a conference April 12-13 at the Hotel Commodore, New York City, under the auspices of its Postwar Reconstruction Committee headed by Vice President Matthew Woll.

The recommendation of the committee was for the establishment of an international organization to maintain and enforce peace, together with a detailed program for world and national economic reconstruction. Prominent labor leaders, experts and students of social and economic problems addressed the conference which was attended by 1,000 delegates from labor unions from all over the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico.

Members of OEU 11773 attending the conference were Margaret Scattergood, Boris Shishkin, Mary Erb, Audrey Delaney, Mary Potter, and Bernard Tassler.

trades. In every firm, plant, store and shop the interests of office workers are mutually interdependent with those of other workers. Close cooperation in collective bargaining procedures will yield positive advantages to us and our fellow-

SMOKES TO YANKS OVERSEAS

At the April meeting, the membership voted to send a case of cigarettes to our fighting forces overseas. These cigarettes, which will be distributed free to the Yanks, in the Italian war zone, bear the union label, and a message from our membership.

The worth of this project is brought home to us in a letter received from Bruce Robertson, formerly employed at AFL headquarters. He wrote to George Meany, Sec.-Treas. AFL, the following:
March 30.

Dear Mr. Meany and Gang:

I got a big surprise today when I went ashore to a foreign port of which I cannot tell you, but anyhow cigarettes were being passed out and I was lucky enough to get two packs which were marked "American Federation of Labor, 901 Mass. Ave. N. W., Washington, D. C. Not for sale."

I am not only speaking for myself but for my shipmates who also received cigarettes from the AFL. We all want to take this opportunity to thank you very much.

I'll bet you folks don't know who I ran into about a month ago—well it was none other than "Herkimer" Douglas, yes, I nearly fell over when I saw him and thought maybe I would get killed after all the handshaking because he just kept beating on me and was glad to see one of his old co-workers.

Doug. looks pretty good with the exception of losing a little weight, which we are all doing.

Sure hope this mess ends in a hurry because I really want to get back.

Tell everyone I still think about them and have them drop a guy a line or two. Hope everyone is enjoying good health.

I will close now because I am getting pretty sleepy, so good luck to everyone. I will be waiting to hear from you folks.

Your old Pal,

Bruce.

A. B. Robertson, SK3c
U.S.S. Franklin S1 Div.
c/o Fleet Postmaster
New York, N. Y.

P. S. You can address me as 2d class any time after the 1st of April. Now, how about that.

DELEGATE ELECTED

At the regular meeting on April 4 the membership voted to elect and to pay the expenses of one delegate to represent the union at the Maryland State and D. C. Federation of Labor convention to be held in Cumberland commencing May 22.

Brother Probey, President and Business Representative, was the elected delegate.

workers in other trades. Concerted backing of the entire membership of the American Federation of Labor will be assured us by our charter. In accepting our charter we must accept responsibility for making it a charter of growth.