

10th 8th Annual Convention 1944

# International Woodworkers of America

*Affiliated with*

THE CONGRESS OF INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATIONS  
AND CANADIAN CONGRESS OF LABOUR



*Proceedings of the*

## Eighth Constitutional Convention

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that as far as I am personally concerned, that is one of the reasons that I am up here, that I do not want the International Woodworkers to be branded as a Communist organization because there are a few knotheads within it.

Now, Mr. Chairman, the Constitution being as it is, it is that way by referendum vote. The membership of the Woodworkers made their position very clear as to their feeling about Communist Party members within the organization, and I would like to say this, that we heard a lot about tolerance yesterday. Well, my feeling is this, that as an individual, if one of these boys, if that is his belief, okeh; if he wants to go out here on the street or in the field and get on a soap box and preach to the trees, that is okeh by me, if he does it as an individual.

But the thing that I do object to, the thing that I have a right to object to, is for that same man, with those same beliefs, using this organization, the International Woodworkers of America, to further the program that he puts before the union.

Now, from the evidence submitted, and further from that same source we know that in the past these people have—yes, they have not only attempted, but they have actually used our organization to further the interests of the Communist Party as such.

And why not? They are not only encouraged to. They are demanded to. They are shown all the ways in order to do it within the organization. I would like to read just briefly one paragraph from the Manual for Community Club Leaders, one of the documents that was used here yesterday. And I might say that it was overlooked yesterday that this was published by the Communist National Committee in March of 1944, and this is one of the many duties of the Labor Chairman within the Communist Party: (Reading)

"The Labor Chairman and labor committee should assume responsibility for the systematic increase in the club membership . . ."

this is the Communist Club . . .

"among trade unionists, discuss with each trade union club member the recruiting of new members," . . . get this . . .

"help organize non-Communist trade union discussion groups, small gatherings for" . . .

what for?

"for recruiting as well as giving attention to the extension of the circulation of the Daily Worker and The Worker, the systematic distribution of literature, among non-Communist trade unionists."

I might say that this is very enlightening, inasmuch as it points out many of the subtle means of

working within the organization, going to the point of where they set up their own clubs, and the way they would fool the individual people who might come into these clubs.

It says, when the people come to the club headquarters . . . "let them find it as simple and wholesome and unmysterious as their own home. When they come up, see that someone is immediately assigned to welcome them and take them around to meet others who may be in headquarters at the same time."

Get this. "Alongside the poster advertising the Communist pamphlet, let them find a poster telling them what ration stamps are valid at that time and when they expire. Alongside the place card announcing the state and city governing officials from your particular district, let them find posted a list of club activities, such as war bonds, scrap drives, blood-giving and so forth. A good war poster will tell the message better than a long slogan. A good anti-Fascist cartoon will often explain effectively the role of your club in the community. Warm hospitality and a friendly atmosphere and clean-kept headquarters will win many new friends for the Communist Club."

Oh, they are fine people, no question about it. They wouldn't fool you any, but they would work within your organization to defeat the very purpose it was set up for, and to use this organization, yes, as other trade union organizations have been used in the past, to further the interests of the Communist Party as such.

The Communist Party and the Communist Political Association, all through this and many of their other books put out by the Communist Party, they state the reason for changing the name and why it is necessary. It is a grand organization and meets with the change in times, and the times have now changed to where we are political-minded to the extent that now it is going to be the Communist Political Association. They will continue to work within this organization. I say to you that there can be but one choice among the Delegates, and that is to uphold the decision of the International President and Executive Board, because, as they have gone over the Constitution which has been laid down by the membership involved, they are duty bound to uphold it.

If we are interested in this organization, as an organization, to build wages, hours and working conditions, then we must keep it a labor union as such, without having it used by other individual people who at all times reserve the right to use the organization for whatever means may be dictated to them from someone from the Communist Political Association.

VICE-PRESIDENT BALLARD: Brother Singh.

BROTHER SINGH: (1-118). Brother Chairman and Brothers, I joined the IWA in 1940. When I joined,

the Chairman of my club, or Local, asked me to raise my hand and take a pledge; and with all sincerity in my heart, I took that pledge. He told me, "Brother, I welcome you in this Union," and the duties of this union and responsibilities will not interfere in any way with my civic or religious duties.

For quite a while after that, like many other members, the so-called stupid members, I didn't go through the Constitution as a whole and find out certain other clauses and now when this issue came up, I looked into the dictionary and saw the word "civic." It included everything political. Of course, I don't know if that is Communism or not, but my personal interpretation is that a person should be free to belong to any organization which is tolerated by the law of the land. The Bill of Rights and the Constitution of Canada recognize or at least tolerate the Communist Party or the Communist Association.

It is not my purpose to go into that issue.

Before I came into this country about five or six years ago, I knew little about Communism. The only thing I ever heard when I was a child was that the Communists killed all the priests and all the persons who say God; that the Communists nationalize and socialize everything; and chills used to run through my spine because I was to some extent and still am religious.

But I do not know what transpired in this Union five or six years ago. I joined, not to debate politics, red or white. I joined so that myself and my fellow workers could get better wages, healthier working conditions, and march ahead.

All that I know about Communism is from history books. I know none of the struggles that took place inside this Union about which the Brothers spoke yesterday with a great deal of recrimination and prejudice.

I know one historic fact which I have gone through the history books to find, and that is this: since 1917, when Russia came into power, or Soviet Russia came into power, the world was divided into two camps; one was the Communist camp, and the other was the anti-Communist camp.

Hitler rose to power. Why? Because the world or a large part of it would not tolerate Communism, and he was being promoted to protect it from Communism. Japanese militarism was supported and abetted by other governments on the same basis. Hitler was given credits and was given money and arms to smash Communism, and he has used that word well. He said that there was Communism in the Peoples Republic and he had come to destroy that. He again said he was going to march against Communism and we gave him Czechoslovakia, Austria, all that he wanted, because he was destroying Communism. Yes, he said, "Today here we are signing the death

of the Communist Party." I remember well that in 1937, in Berlin, three men got together and they said they were signing the death of the Communist world and Communism all over, but they signed the death of America and Britain and all that we stand for. The issue was clear-cut; that one issue, the issue of Communism, brought this war about, and just because the democratic world refused to cooperate with the Communists because they were the wretches and everything else that was spoken here yesterday, we refused to cooperate with them, and the result was this war. Millions of people have already died. It has taken the blood of 50 million people to drive home to us the lesson that we have got to work together with them in Russia. Fifty million have already died, and then President Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin sit at the same table and decide that we have got to cooperate, that there is no other way. Not that we like each other, but the events of the world force us to do that.

Has a man got to learn that lesson or not, or do we still want some more blood?

The issue here is not just the case of these two Communists. I know that the Communists are always first the scapegoats, second comes the Jews, third comes the Negroes, fourth comes the Catholics, the East Indians and Orientals. I know that. That is a fact.

I am a member of a minority race. Last year the Labor Minister in B. C. spoke some very uncomplimentary words about my race. He said they were cheats, dishonest, and liars and everything in the books.

What if some of the people here begin to accept his views about my race? Can I not see that that is expected, like Communists, like the Jews, that my race can be branded as that, too, and one by one they are chucked out as cheats and liars?

I know that well, because when Hitler started to clean his house, he said the Communists were the first, and then the Social Democrats were sitting in the Reichstag clapping their hands, "Hooray, he is killing the Communists." But then came the turn for the Social Democrats, and at that time the Catholics were applauding Hitler, but then the Catholics came too. Pastor Niemoller went to the concentration camp too.

I say that a member should not be judged or a person should not be judged from his label, political label, race or anything else, only judging his activities inside the Union or inside an organization.

I haven't heard a single Brother here bring forward any accusation against those three Brothers. Have they done anything harmful to the Union? Bring those concrete facts, then charge the men, throw them out, do anything, may it be me or anyone else.

Someone said they are charter members. They must not be saboteurs and wretches and their purpose is to destroy this Union and use it, otherwise they could not have stayed in the Union as long as they did.

If there is any record, then bring that record forward here in this Convention.

Then there are others who say we voted on this issue so many years ago, in 1941. At that time in District No. 1, and that is all I know about, we had around a few hundred members. Now we have 20,000 and those 20,000 would like to vote on the issue.

We will not accept the word of any one person or any bunch of persons on this interpretation. No one person is indispensable to this Union or any organization. No group of persons is indispensable, may they be Communist or anti-Communist.

The organization as a whole, the membership, is indispensable, and I say that we demand the right to vote on this issue.

**PRESIDENT LOWERY:** One minute left, Brother Singh.

**BROTHER SINGH:** (1-118). Thank you. In addition to that, on this same issue of interpretation, I say that this issue should be placed before the membership.

I know three years ago we had that election, but since then the leaders Churchill and Roosevelt have seen fit to sit together with them and save the future of the coming world. It doesn't matter how we feel. I know some of the Brothers here have been prejudiced against certain people. Pritchett did this and someone else did that, but I can assure you in District No. 1 Pritchett has been President and I have seen his opponents speak on the floor, they have spoken many times, even monopolize the floor, but at no time were they asked to sit down or anything, and we are not dictated by any one person and we are not going to be, and I say that this is an issue which must be decided by the rank and file and nobody else.

I thank you.

**PRESIDENT LOWERY:** Now, Delegates, if you will relax for a moment, we will have the Convention picture taken.

(There was a short intermission while a Convention photograph was taken.)

**PRESIDENT LOWERY:** Convention come to order. The Delegate over here has the floor.

**BROTHER ALSBURY:** (1-357). Mr. Chairman, Brothers and Sisters: Brother Pritchett spoke yesterday representing the delegation from British Columbia. He has the right to represent those that so

desire, but I and others like me are quite capable of presenting our own case.

I wish to speak in favor of the motion to uphold the International Executive Board in the decision that they made.

The International Executive Board was elected by the membership, both in Canada and the United States. Therefore, they must be a responsible body.

The Union has heard a great deal of discussion on the Constitution. The Constitution was drawn up in 1937; and, as I see it, it is a good Constitution. It has done a good job for the workers in the United States, and what is good for the American workers is good enough for the Canadian workers.

If we are going to change the Constitution for every political party that so desires, we will be sitting in Convention from now till doomsday, writing Constitutions to suit this one and that one.

The Communist party and its members have the right to belong to that party if they so desire, but they have not the right to filter into our Unions and bore from within and use our Unions for political purposes.

The International Woodworkers of America is a trade union and should be kept as such. Workers joining this organization should be given the right to participate in the business and to occupy positions if they are so elected; but the Communist Party in British Columbia, as in other countries, have made it their business to get their stooges and followers into all of the important positions and use discrimination against any member who has the fortitude to stand up and express his opinion as a trade unionist.

I want to bring a message to you Brothers and Sisters here of the conditions in British Columbia, and I will tell you they are in a very critical stage. The workers in this country are just the same as the workers in your country. They are desirous of organization. They realize that to try to bargain individually is a thing of the past. Consequently, they look to trade unionism.

What I am going to tell you as a worker—and when I say a worker, I mean one that slaves eight hours a day and tends to his trade union activities at night, not while a paid official of the Union. In British Columbia here we have the Labor Progressive Party, just another label for the Communist Party. They seem to have a mania for changing their label every so often. Nevertheless, they are like a leopard. You can't change the spots.

The workers in this Province are very desirous of organization, but they have come to the end of their rope. They feel that it is useless to pour their money into something that isn't going to be getting them anything.