
Circular Letter to Trade Union Locals from the National Executive Committee of the World War Veterans, circa Jan. 25, 1921.

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Multiple copies including one supplied by Lemuel Bolles of the American Legion, Feb. 18, 1921.

Dear Sir and Brother:

Don't read this letter unless you are fully awake and can see straight. There will be no profit in our kidding ourselves. If organized labor can be smashed, it will be smashed and smashed utterly by organized Greed this year, for, as Babson has pointed out, Greed is now more greedy than ever before, and labor and a few of the farmers' organizations are the only factors possible to prevent the perfecting of actual industrial slavery in America. The slogan of this manhunt is "the open shop" and we think you know it. The central Soviets of capital and employers are marshalling their forces and equipping them for the fray, and those forces include all that is efficient — social, industrial, economic, political, military, and financial.

The men of the World War Veterans, 90 percent of whom went through fire and blood for America and humanity on the pledge of the rulers of America that after the war America would be made right, propose to hold those rulers to that pledge. For them to declare industrial war on the men who fought through the bloody hell of France is to slap us in the face, for we are the men of labor and in a fight we do not know how to turn the other cheek; so the World War Vets have made labor's fight their own and we want labor to make our fight their own.

Let us take a few specific cases. If you want to know the power of organized WORLD WAR VETERANS, turn to Fort Dodge, Iowa. Last spring Fort Dodge was the storm center of Iowa, and it was the home of the Labor Party of Iowa. The men of the Quaker Oats, the potteries, the gypsum plants, and the machine shops were facing annihilation by reason of the campaign for the open shop. To help break the spirit of the men, the only other large ex-servicemen's organization [the American Legion] was unofficially, and sometimes officially, turned loose upon them; their meetings were harassed, their organizers intimidated, credit shut down, families forcibly ejected by undue process of law from leased houses; and all the yellow tricks of Greed with which you have often come into contact were used against them. Then two organizers for the Vets happened on the scene. We got a couple of hundred labor men together in Labor Hall (with the agents and leaders of the Manhunt present to watch what was going on) and for about 2 hours we poured fire enough into that bunch to burn iron to gold. The result was that the boys found their guts, put in a post of Vets about 300 strong, and told the agents of the Manhunt that the rough stuff was off. Greed turned yellow and the fight against the open shop was won in Fort Dodge through the combined efforts of labor and the Vets, with the Vets taking

the lead. If you are slow to believe, write to Billy Reardon of the *Union News* in that town.

Take another instance. Labor of Minneapolis was facing a crisis. The political powers of the city and state, combined with all the other forces and powers of industrial autocrats, were delivering telling broadsides against Labor. They were refused permission to hold parades, meetings were broken up by the Blue Coats, leaders were threatened with jail and were thrown in jail for unconcealed contempt of court process. The World War Veterans sprung into the breach, for the Vets enjoy nothing so much as a clean, open scrap for the rights of mankind. We shot a bit of Nervine into the Labor men and got them marshalled by the thousands, but were refused permission to hold a parade at the same time that the other gang was staging one. We told the City to go to Hell, and if they tried to stop our parade we would kick their bullies into the mud (one of our posts there number some 5,000 hard-boiled ex-doughboys). We held the parade, and the rough stuff vanished. Minneapolis is a fairly decent American town now.

At Clinton, Iowa, Labor was seeking to elect a city administration that would be fair and square to all. It was getting beat up badly. The World War Vets got the SOS and a couple of our organizers happened along. We put in a post of some 200 members, all labor doughboys itching for a scrap. The bullies started the Bolshevik name-calling stunt and also the usual rough stuff. The first time they mixed (our men were out peddling handbills advertising a meeting and the bullies tried to stop them) 5 Vets cleaned up 11 bullies and cleaned 'em right. Yes, the bills were spread and the meeting held; and just to show who was boss, the day before the election some 500 Vets laid off duty for the day and canvassed the old town from house to house, store to store, bank to bank, upside down and backwards. Yes, Labor elected the city government. Write your secretary there.

What I am trying to tell you is that if you

have not yet known the power and efficiency of the organized laboring ex-doughboys, you are missing your best bet, and you are doing your men an injustice by leaving them at the mercy of Greed without protection.

IF THE ORGANIZED LABOR OF AMERICA WILL "GET BEHIND" THE WORLD WAR VETERANS SINCERELY AND IN ERNEST, AS IT SHOULD, THE VETS WILL PLEDGE THEMSELVES TO WRECK THIS OPEN SHOP COMEDY AND WRECK IT SO BADLY THAT THAT COMEDY WILL RETURN TO WALL STREET AND PLAY TO THE GALLERIES THERE. Give us cooperation and we will make it so hot for the M&M and kindred organizations that they will want to go to Hot Springs, Hades for 3 weeks to cool off.

So far the Vets have been playing a lone hand. We have not had a dollar of aid outside our own pockets, and for labor's cause some of us have gone down as deep as \$1,000, some \$250, and many of the rank and file have thrown in their 10s and 20s.

Now we are talking to labor, and we are talking turkey. Give us your 5 million labor men of America, put \$100,000 into our hands or at our disposal, and we will organize the ex-doughboys of America into a combat organization that will save America from the economic, industrial, financial, and political anarchy into which you know as well as we do that she is drifting. You men of New York, back us for \$5,000 and we will save your lives. You men of the Northeastern states, put \$25,000 at our disposal and the agents of the American Woolen Mill spent a few winters in the Isle of Pines. You lads down there in West Virginia with the soldiers at your throats, why do you not call in the men of the Vets, who are experts at this soldier business, and we will take these soldiers away from your throats. You men in Akron whom we have heard left that burg by the ten thousands, why did you not let us turn Akron into a Fort Dodge? And you men all over this fair land

of ours, who ask nothing more from industry than a square deal for yourselves and your families, Wake Up! Give your Executive Secretary orders to call in the Vets and put some of your money where it will produce good results quickly. Pay our organizers enough to cover room rent, meal tickets, railroad fare, and decent clothes and we will get them on the job for you. Only, if organized labor wants the job done, the same organized labor will have to kick through with the dough. We have the men and the talent, the Goods and the Guts, and we KNOW THE GAME. We have not yet exhausted our fighting resources, and we propose to continue the battle whether you line up with us or not; but we are calling for reinforcements from a source from which we have a right to expect them.

We are not fighting the US Government. We are fighting those anarchists in and out of office who abuse and misuse official prerogatives. We are not radicals except in one respect — that this damnable intimidation, this wholesale destruction of and disregard for our fundamental rights of citizenship MUST STOP.

Whip your Central body into line and shoot us 250 bucks, a range for our organizers, and enjoy life again.

Fraternally yours,

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Edited by Tim Davenport.

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