



The Reconstitution of the General Confederation of Labour in Italy⁽¹⁾

by

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IN the last days of September 1906 the delegates of seven hundred trade associations of every part of Italy met in the Chamber of Labour at Milan for the purpose of constituting the General Confederation of Labour.

The initiative in establishing a central body for the trade union movement, on the model of the central bodies existing in other countries, had been taken by the Metal Workers' Federation, and had immediately won the sympathies of the principal federations and of the most powerful chambers of labour existing at that time. In the years 1905 and 1906 the Italian workers' movement was passing through a crisis. During the opening years of the new century the labour movement had developed its organisation with extraordinary rapidity; it won easy victories against the employing class, who were unaccustomed to bear the shock of the combined forces of labour. But as time went on and those general conditions which had favoured the rapid ascent of the proletariat ceased to prevail, the struggle became more difficult and the growth of working-class organisations slackened. It was no longer a question of teaching the workers the simple principle of organisation and the duty of class solidarity; they had to be instructed in the best methods of combination, they had to accustom themselves to resist the counter-attacks of the employers, to perfect the working and tactics of the trade unions, and to acquire greater cohesion and unity of aim in all they undertook.

The crisis of these two years was essentially one affecting method and policy. The quarrel which had arisen in the Socialist camp and which had led to the division of the party into two sections, the Reformist and the Revolutionary, had spread to the workers' movement; for in Italy the masses react above all to political questions. The result was that

(1) *Confederazione Generale del Lavoro.*

the trade union world itself split into halves which followed two great currents of thought ; one half closely followed political Reformism, while the other drew its inspiration from the principles of revolutionary syndicalism at that time greatly in vogue.

The result of this conflict was that the Central Secretariat of Resistance ⁽¹⁾, an organisation established in 1902 for the purpose of co-ordinating the activities of the various federations of trade unions, had ceased to act. After the Congress of 1905 the management of this body had passed into the hands of the opponents of Reformism, who, however, were not united. This anti-Reformist *bloc* was the result of a purely accidental fusion of those bodies which were determined to remain absolutely outside politics, such as the Federation of Workers in Book Production, together with syndicalist, republican and anarchist elements, the extreme left wing of socialism, and the regionalist party, in a word, with all the elements which, from one motive or another, were opposed to the principle that trade unionism should use the political as well as the industrial weapon in order to enforce its claims. The *bloc* was strong while it remained in opposition, and in fact succeeded in placing the Reformists in a minority ; but when it was called upon to pass from mere opposition to constructive policy it found itself hampered ; the result was that the Secretariat became completely paralysed.

After a time the Reformist organisation thought that the moment had arrived for emerging from this state of inaction ; and it was then that they threw out the idea of forming a General Confederation of Labour. A committee was set up in the Chamber of Labour at Milan for the purpose of organising a congress of all the associations, that is to say, of convening a sort of constituent assembly ; this assembly was to decide the question of the new rules and the question of policy.

The congress, as already stated, was held during the closing days of September and the opening days of October. The clash of rival ideas made it very lively. The coalition of those forming the opposition tried to attack the validity of the proceedings on the ground that the congress had not been convened under the ordinary procedure. Finally, the Reformists won, and the General Federation of Labour was declared constituted.

At this point it may be worth while to quote an extract, which appeared in the first number of the organ published by the Confederation, containing some comment on the congress. It will serve to throw light on the social and political tendencies of the period and on the nature of the proposals put forward by those who were trying to lay solid foundations on which to build up a workers' movement, by establishing

(2) *Segretariato Centrale della Resistenza.*

a disciplinary organisation such as the Confederation was intended to be.

The quotation in question runs :—

Honour to the active and ardent leaders of the Italian proletariat, not only because they have succeeded in winning a victory, but also because they have had the sense to state their case, occasionally with brutal frankness, but always in a way to leave no doubt as to what is their idea of the labour movement. Honour to all who spoke out plainly, so frustrating every ingenious trick and compelling all unprepared and heterogeneous elements to fall back, to form a *bloc*, to take to flight. But a warning note must be sounded. However much it may be to the good that alien elements are prevented from continuing their destructive work under the cover of collective responsibility—and this is why their secession was a real act of liberation for us—it is none the less true that many organisations have hung back for reasons independent of their own wishes. The confusion of mind from which the Corporativists of Ciminagli, the Republicans of Fusacchia, and the Southerners of Guarino and de Falco all equally suffer is precisely the same as that from which the whole of the Italian working classes were suffering not so many years ago. The mist of surviving prejudices still lingers over them; twilight still hovers over their minds and they are aware of nothing more than of an indistinct longing as of a people desiring redemption. We hope that the General Confederation of Labour may be able to illumine even these depths with its wholesome light; the secession of Milan will have served to illustrate the plain and simple fact that workers still behave in this way because misunderstanding still reigns among them.

The Confederation was constituted on principles clearly defined in Article 3 of its constitution. The text of this Article is here given in its entirety.

The objects of the Confederation shall be :

(a) to exercise a general direction over the labour movement, both industrial and agricultural, without regard to political distinctions, and to co-ordinate the action of industrial federations and chambers of labour affiliated to the Confederation, so as to limit the functions of the first class of organisation to general and national affairs, and of the second class to local industrial affairs;

(b) to communicate directly to working-class representatives the social reforms and financial demands put forward by working-class congresses;

(c) to assist, control, and co-ordinate all attempts made by the working classes to obtain labour legislation, and to conduct a vigorous propaganda in order to support the action of working-class representatives on public bodies, with a view to obtaining from the state, provinces, or communes such laws and regulations as are demanded and clearly desired by the working class;

(d) to consolidate the movement for working-class resistance by entering into close relations, and acting in conjunction, with federations of co-operative and mutual benefit societies, and by promoting the independent development of local co-operative groups, and their national and international federations;

(e) to enter into such agreement with political parties devoted to the defence of the workers' interests as may be necessary and desirable, in order that any conflict which may arise between capital and labour may be decided in the way most favourable to the working-classes, and that any general accentuation of the class struggle may be directed to practical ends;

(f) to settle all disputes which may arise between various bodies belonging to industrial organisations, and for such purpose to adopt,

for the benefit of the contending parties, fixed rules of procedure which shall be determined and sanctioned by referendum among the sections;

(g) to raise the economic, moral, and intellectual standard of the working classes by means of more effective and permanent propaganda;

(h) to spread the idea of the national and international solidarity of the working class by establishing and maintaining solidarity between industrial bodies devoted to the movement for working class resistance ;

(i) on the occasion of any dispute, to compile statistics relating to the strength and activity of organisations, to strikes, to the numbers of unorganised workers, noting the causes of such want of organisation, to the approximate local, district, or national percentage of blacklegs, and so forth;

(l) to maintain the necessary supervision over, and pressure on, the Department of Labour with a view to the application and scrupulous observance of social legislation;

(m) to help the workers both directly and by means of their representative organs, independently of all parties and schools, to realise the whole of their claims.

The statutes have since been revised where they deal with the composition of the Confederation, but the programme of policy has remained practically unaltered. The Confederation was originally based on the associations (*leghe*), Article 2 of the statutes being worded as follows :

The Confederation shall be constituted of all organisations affiliated to national craft federations and to local chambers of labour. Independent organisations may also belong to the Confederation, provided they prove at the time of their joining the Confederation that no national federation of their trade exists, and that there is no chamber of labour in their district; provided further that they conform to the requirements of the present statutes and to all decisions which may be arrived at in congress and by referendum.

The congress held at Mantua in 1914 substituted the following Article for the one just quoted.

The Confederation shall be constituted :

(a) of all national industrial or craft federations which are based on the principle of the class war and whose purpose is to aid the working classes in their movement of resistance, and which further compel all their branches to affiliate to the Confederation, and to confederated chambers of labour where such exist;

(b) of all chambers of labour based on the principle of the class war which compel all their branches to affiliate to the Confederation and to their national craft federation;

(c) of all associations which have no national industrial or craft federation and no chamber of labour in their district.

Finally, Article 2 was amended a third time at the last congress, held at Leghorn in 1921, by the suppression of the word "craft" in reference to the federations.

The tendency of these modifications has been to fuse local associations into great national and district groups, thus carrying out one of the principal articles of the Confederation programme. Pressure of circumstances forced the Confederation, when it first started, to welcome unions of every trade and in every district, on the sole condition that

they should affiliate to their national federation, and to the chamber of labour in their province or commune. At that time there were still very few federations, and the influence of those which did exist did not extend much beyond the district in which they had their headquarters. Organisation in the form of chambers of labour was a great deal more popular than federation; the Confederation aimed at giving equal importance to both and therefore imposed on the associations the obligation of affiliating themselves simultaneously to their chamber of labour.

As long as the Confederation was a union of associations, it obviously had no administrative relations with the executive authorities of federations or of chambers of labour, except where these superior bodies voluntarily took upon themselves to compel all their members to be affiliated to the Confederation *en bloc*. Little by little this principle spread, until the moment arrived when these great centralised bodies entirely prevailed over the scattered associations. Thereupon it was agreed that the main organisation of the trade union movement should be based on the federations and chambers; isolated associations, however, which could find no federation of their trade and no chamber of labour in their district to which to affiliate, could also be admitted by way of exception, the only special condition imposed being the payment of a rather higher contribution, on the ground that such associations contribute nothing to the funds of the federations or chambers of labour.

The inference to be drawn is that a policy of moderate centralisation of the trade union movement was suitable to the special conditions prevailing in Italy and has fully justified itself. The Italian federative system is an intermediate stage between absolute centralisation and complete devolution. Both territorial and industrial requirements are increasingly compelling the workers to organise themselves in large bodies which make for unity. It must not, however, be supposed that there are no longer any craft federations in Italy. Article 2 as finally amended allows certain exceptions in favour of existing federations, especially among the workers in the graphic and glass-working trades, who have not yet organised themselves into industrial federations. The Article, nevertheless, proves that the principle of fusion has found universal acceptance.

Our historical sketch is now practically complete. One further point, however, remains to be explained, if the working of the Confederation is to be understood.

Membership of the Confederation is proved by a stamp corresponding to the amount of a member's contribution; the Confederation issues the stamps every year, and they are affixed to the card which the worker holds as member of an affiliated organisation. Stamps were originally 5 centimes for agricultural workers and 10 centimes for industrial workers.

In 1914 they were raised to 15 centimes for all workers indiscriminately, in 1919 to 50 centimes, and finally to one lira.

As long as the Confederation was based on the associations, its internal working was not difficult. Every affiliated association bought stamps corresponding to the number of its members, and had a right to be represented in proportion to its numerical strength; at the congresses and in nominations to office chambers of labour and federations disappeared, in spite of the fact that they might be affiliated as bodies. Later, corporate representation was transferred from the separate associations to federations and to chambers, and then a conflict began between these two sets of bodies. The number of federations grew and those already existing became more important. Thus when these federations began to buy the stamps for all their members, according to the new system, the result was that the chambers of labour were restricted to buying stamps for those only of their sections which happened not to be affiliated to any national federation. The figures published by the Confederation show that the chambers in great industrial centres have only a very small number of members registered in the Confederation books. It was not that their membership was small, but that very few stamps were bought by them owing to the fact that the bulk of their members had already received their stamps through a federation.

The time came when the chambers thought they discerned in this loss of votes a decrease of their influence in the Confederal organisation, and they demanded that the balance should be restored between the two sets of bodies. The problem was solved by a system of proportional representation. When a vote by show of hands becomes necessary, the total number of votes represented at the congress is divided by two, and half is assigned to the federations and half to the chambers of labour. The votes belonging to each of these divisions are again sub-divided into parts proportional to the numbers represented by each body. Thus a federation with 50,000 members will have a number of votes, which will be double the number belonging to a federation with only 25,000 members, but equal to that belonging to a chamber of labour with 50,000 members. Substantially there is no change, because every member of the Confederation is equally bound to belong both to a chamber and a federation. But this method of voting is an attempt to remove all appearance of inequality between the two sets of organisations.

Some other reforms became necessary in order to define more precisely the relations between federations and political parties. Here the resolutions passed from time to time, as occasion arose, by the various congresses had a greater effect than the statutes, which owing to their very conciseness of expression required interpretation. In its relations with political parties the Italian Confederation, from 1908 till

the end of the war, conformed to the well-known resolution of the Stuttgart International Socialist Congress of 1907; it also conformed to the resolutions of the International Socialist Congresses in its relations with the co-operative movement.

To sum up, the Confederation has not felt it necessary during the last fifteen years to alter either its industrial aims or its general political policy. Such alterations as have been adopted have been simply the logical consequences of growth and of the corporate spirit which has always inspired it. Nor is there any present intention of departing from established policy; on the contrary, recent constitutional modifications prove a tendency towards greater centralisation. The programme, which has so far served simply as a guiding principle, is now to be carried out completely. As the General Secretary expressed it in his report to the Congress of Leghorn, the central organisation of the trade union movement must cease to be the "General Confederation of Resistance, and really become the General Confederation of Labour", a conception which obviously implies a strengthening of the central authority at the expense of the branches and local authorities, and also looks forward to the absorption of co-operative societies and mutual benefit associations into the Confederation. The Confederation would then be in a position to give a single common direction to the whole labour movement, though the affiliated organisations could still maintain their autonomy in their own sphere.

In fact, the principle of centralisation, timidly affirmed when the Confederation was first established, and for various and contradictory reasons fiercely opposed on all sides, seems now to have made so much progress that it no longer meets with any resistance even in theory. From being a simple instrument of union between the workers' associations, the General Confederation seems destined to become the new "workers' state", endowed with increasingly complex functions; it will at least be an organisation which will stand against the "capitalist state", and through whose agency the whole political action of the working classes will be conducted.

Nevertheless, the reasons which induced the Secretaries of the Confederation, at the last general congress in February 1921 at Leghorn and in the course of later discussion on the General Council, to propose certain radical amendments to the constitution merit discussion. They hold that the Confederation cannot, as things are arranged at present, effectively lead the trade union movement or pull it together. It may be a central body, but it is unable to call on corresponding supporting bodies. The chambers of labour are autonomous, and will remain so unless the constitution of the Confederation is radically changed. The Confederation can, it is true, control and co-ordinate national movements, because

they are operated by the national federations; but it cannot do anything of the kind where the movement is of a local character, whether communal, provincial, or regional. Yet it is every day more necessary to put an end to a state of things in which every organisation is absolutely free to do as it likes, for even local movements which appear to be of only limited importance may have national reactions; certain demands may prejudice the work of other associations or in other places, and the methods adopted may react on the rest of the trade union movement. Demands put forward by different classes of workers need to be co-ordinated, and this is more than ever necessary, so that none who happen to be favoured by special circumstances may secure a privileged position to the injury of others. Experience must teach the workers that a rise in wages normally increases the cost of production, and therefore the prices of manufactured articles; this rise in prices has to be borne by the body of consumers, of whom the bulk are simply other workers. The demands of those who already enjoy specially favourable conditions need to be restrained; those classes of workers' who lag behind need to be encouraged. Then the workers' movement will become a really genuine class movement and not an agglomeration of the separate movements of autonomous, independent grades of persons.

The same applies to methods. Methods adopted in one province or in one commune react on the whole nation. Formerly the workers' movement was confronted by unimportant and purely local organisations of capitalists. The position is now very different. The Confederation of Industry and the Agrarian Confederation stand face to face with the Confederation of Labour. When certain methods are adopted in one district, the capitalist organisations, if it suits their purpose, take advantage of them to weaken the position of the workers' organisations in other places. The tactical errors of one province are paid for by the whole nation.

Political reactions, again, are very serious and injure the whole movement. Workers' organisations must get rid of the localism which still governs them and remember that they are but parts of the trade union movement. They must realise that it will often be necessary to forego certain methods which might be useful, through possibly less so than is imagined, in their own district and for their own group, because these methods may work out to the injury of other districts and of other groups of workers. The latest phase of the trade union movement has constantly proved this true.

Then on the question of sitting on certain committees, and of making use of certain legislative bodies, labour organisations are apt to proceed in a very local spirit, taking no account of what is done in other places or by other workers.

The Confederation, which is bound to consider the trade union movement as a whole and to have equal regard to the more backward as well as to the more progressive centres and

organisations, has again and again to bow before the objections of some local bodies and to suffer from the indiscipline or weakness of others. Yet its real duty is to carry the labour movement, however gradually, from the separate group on to the idea of the whole class, from the district on to the idea of the whole nation, from the nation on to the International.

Such were the reasons put forward in support of the demand for a complete reform of the Confederation rules. The speakers proved that the Confederation had not the necessary powers for imposing a strict discipline on the organisations, and ended by asking the congress to pass a resolution in favour of the principle of turning the chambers of labour into branches of the Confederation. The chambers should disappear as autonomous bodies, and be replaced by branches of the Confederation depending upon the central authorities. These branches should have the necessary powers for regulating, co-ordinating, and controlling local action. Should an association wish to start some movement, it should be obliged to submit any proposed demands to such a branch and to obtain its sanction before sending them in to the employers. In the case of an affiliated association the sanction of the federation to which affiliation had been made should also be required. Confederal branches should also have the right to forbid the adoption of methods which might inflict, or threaten to inflict, injury on other groups of workers, whether in the same or in another district. The staff of the labour chambers would become officers of the Confederation, and would be paid by it; the Confederation would also undertake all other management expenses; contributions payable to the chambers would disappear and be covered by the contributions payable to the Confederation. The Confederation would thus be able to furnish more real assistance to the more backward districts by establishing in them centres for propaganda and for organisation.

The congress accepted the principle of turning the chambers of labour into branches of the Confederation; the resolution passed on the subject instructs the General Council "to consider the proposal and thereafter to submit it for discussion to the chambers, the federations and the National Council; and in the meantime requests the General Council to consider the possibility of setting up district inspection offices for the purpose of making the work of the chambers of labour in any one district uniform".

It therefore still remains uncertain whether the chambers will be turned into branches of the Confederation. The question has still to be submitted to these bodies themselves, and only after they have pronounced in its favour will it be possible to proceed with the amendment of the constitution and carry out the new principle agreed upon.

The resolution, however, has something of a binding

character, in view of the authority of the congress voting it. It is true that the proposal was not unanimously approved. The Communist minority opposed it, for reasons difficult to understand, as the Communists, unlike the revolutionary Syndicalists, are in favour of the greatest possible degree of centralisation. It will certainly meet with further powerful opposition. But in view of the extreme tenacity with which Italians are accustomed to cling to the principle of autonomy, the comparative ease with which the leaders succeeded in obtaining a vote in favour of the principle of their centralising proposals is surprising.

The ideas of the leaders of the movement on the subject of the relations which should in future obtain between the general labour struggle, co-operation, and the mutual aid movement were placed before the congress somewhat as follows :

“Resistance to the capitalist order and co-operation should be looked on as two branches of the same movement. The tendency should be to make the relations between these two wings of the class struggle closer and closer until they are fused into one. The affiliation of the co-operative societies to the Confederation would require important modifications in that part of its constitution which regulates the relations between the co-operative movement and the general movement for resistance to the present order and which determines the rights and duties of mutual aid associations.

The National League of Co-operative Societies⁽³⁾ and the National Federation of Mutual Aid Societies⁽⁴⁾ will have to convene their committees, after the conclusion of our congress, in order to pass the necessary resolutions and take the necessary steps for affiliation. We ask the congress to pass a resolution in favour of the principle of the affiliation of the co-operative and mutual aid societies to the Confederation. The new General Council should be asked to draw up the necessary amendments, in consultation with the organisations concerned, and submit them for final approval to the National Council”.

In the resolution already quoted, in which the congress approved the principle of altering the status of the chambers of labour, it also accepted the additional principle of incorporating the central co-operative bodies and mutual aid societies into the Confederation, as suggested by those speaking for the Council.

The work of uniting the various labour organisations, however, has got beyond the stage of a mere passing of resolutions. At a meeting held in Milan last April between the representatives of the three organisations, a great national

(3) *Legga nazionale delle cooperative.*

(4) *Federazione nazionale delle società di mutuo soccorso.*

union was formed between the Confederation of Labour, the League of Co-operative Societies, and the Federation of Mutual Aid Societies, leaving to each freedom to maintain its independent constitution and to pursue an independent course of action. Solidarity between the three bodies will be shown in a general unity of policy; they will concentrate their separate efforts to secure victory for labour, i.e. for progress and civilisation.

It was decided at this meeting that a new united body should be formed under the name of "The General Confederation of Labour", and should have a central committee of representatives of each of the three organisations. These, however, would continue to exist and enjoy their separate constitutions, hold their own congresses, and maintain their executives and administrative officials.

The new Confederation will have its headquarters in Milan in a building which has already been bought; there the three amalgamated organisations will also have their offices. If necessary, the constitutions of the three bodies will be considered at their next congresses and will be amended as required; at the same time the general constitution of the new Confederation will be voted.

This brief sketch shows that the suggestion is to divide the Confederation into three great branches, each keeping its own executive and pursuing independent action. These three branches would be linked up by a joint committee, which would have the supreme direction of labour policy. The result would be that the fighting movement of the working classes would be centralised, that the small chambers of labour would be grouped to form a single system in each province (this was a point included in the resolution), that industry would be systematised by the substitution of industrial for craft federations, and, above all, that a movement towards permanent union would be set on foot by the establishment of real and lasting interdependence between the three forms of association which defend working-class interests.

It has already been stated that friendly relations formerly existed between trade unions and co-operative societies; there were, however, no restrictions on the initiative of either set of bodies. There was a moment when the Confederation of Labour, the League of Co-operative Societies, and the Federation of Mutual Aid Societies formed an alliance, but this former alliance was not entered into with a view to placing the three organisations under a single directing body. Its aim was merely to bring about agreement between the three executive committees as to certain problems of general interest, especially when pressure was to be exercised on the state to secure legislation.

The question now confronting the three bodies is quite different. The problem is still wholly in the stage of suggestions, and it is impossible to describe in detail the probable

nature of the new labour organisation. There may be a certain degree of centralisation. The new constitution will have to be approved and the new executives chosen, before any true idea can be gained of the change which the Confederation has imposed upon itself. Those who are aware of the differences which separate the various labour movements now to be amalgamated may feel some doubt as to whether the proposed scheme can be carried out. No one, however, can fail to grasp its moral importance. The workers have been taught to turn their thoughts towards the problem of joining up their efforts and forming one united organisation, an organisation whose aim it will be to further the advance of socialism.

There have been definite reasons why the labour movement has moved in this direction. The grounds on which the leaders of the Confederation decided to bring forward their scheme for reforming its constitution have already been indicated. They had become to a certain extent disillusioned as to the efficacy of strikes and of the movement for obtaining continual increases in wages. The selfishness of certain groups and certain grades of workers had ended in creating new inequalities and new privileges within the organised labour movement itself. Even before the General Council of the Confederation had drawn up their proposals for submission to the congress, certain chambers of labour, e.g. those of Reggio Emilia and Ferrara, had already taken steps on their own account to control labour action by compelling associations to submit their demands for previous approval. This was a first step against group selfishness, which, masquerading as revolutionary principle, was in reality only an abuse of the general strength of the movement.

Within the co-operative societies, again, strikes and boycotts were often organised by the employees. The co-operative societies, for their part, did not invariably estimate rightly their duty towards the labour movement. The guild experiments of the building workers, the efforts made by the trade unions to produce or sell goods directly, were sometimes regarded by co-operators as illegitimate invasions of their own particular field. Also, in spite of resolutions passed at congresses, there were frequent cases of co-operative societies shutting themselves up in the selfishness of a privileged group and renouncing all solidarity with other workers. The responsible leaders of the Confederation, even without giving way to those extremists in the trade union movement who aim at absolutely subordinating producers' co-operative societies to the unions, were entirely justified in discussing and suggesting a system of re-organisation calculated, as far as possible, to get rid of all these disadvantages.

Finally, the congress resolved to establish a trade union school. The most experienced leaders of the workers' movement lament the scarcity of persons qualified to hold

office in a labour organisation. The labour movement in Italy has been characterised by the fact that it has been led by individuals who do not belong to the working class. This was particularly common at first, but even today there are still many organisers, especially in the agricultural movement, who do not spring from the working classes. The position is rather different in industry. The great federations are now almost all led by men who themselves were once workers in the industry of which they have since become the paid secretaries. This shows that there has been some reform, though not nearly as much as is called for. Granted that the big federations can almost all produce men of the first rank who combine technical knowledge of their industry with great trade union experience, there are, nevertheless, very few workers to whom the routine work which a great federation requires can be entrusted, and there is a special lack of men qualified to take charge of local and provincial branches. The Reinas, Quaglinos, Buozzis, Gallis, Colombinos in industry and Madame Altobelli in agriculture — to mention only a few names — constitute an élite which may be compared with the ablest organisers in the world; but these leaders are not always able to command a staff which can assist them with zeal and intelligence, and this lack of subordinate staff is often the principal cause of the imperfect working of the organisations.

During the war much thought was given to this problem of finding workers, as a great development of the trade union movement was foreseen. Eventually expectations on this point were far more than fulfilled. Moreover, after the war a great deal of fresh labour legislation was passed, while the labour organisations themselves spread and developed in the way already described. The problem arose as to how to find the workers to run the insurance societies or the trade union manufacturing societies, or the committees for the control of industrial establishments. On all sides this question was being asked, and the upshot was the proposal for establishing a school for labour organisers.

Schools for labour organisers are not a new thing in Italy. They were first established by the Umanitaria Society, which before the war had already arranged special courses for the study of labour legislation and for co-operators. These courses were resumed last year with a more extensive curriculum. During recent years the co-operative societies had also taken the initiative by establishing courses in several provinces, with a view to training up a capable specialist staff. But none of these courses were under the direct control of the Confederation of Labour. So far that body, owing to the smallness of its resources, had not been able to attempt anything in the way of workers' education. It now proposes to establish a school of its own, the chief purpose of which will be to train workers who intend to devote themselves to the labour movement. The question was brought before

the congress, which unanimously approved the suggestions put forward. A member of the congress, in fact, demanded that the new General Confederation should have four managing committees instead of three, in other words, that a fourth education committee should be set up in addition to the three proposed committees of action, co-operation, and mutual aid. The congress was unwilling to go so far as this, nor did it see its way at present to adopt the proposal made from another quarter to establish a Faculty of Labour at the University of Pavia. The Confederation does not reject the principle contained in either of these proposals, but here as always intends to proceed little by little.

The federations felt it most emphatically necessary to provide a basis of special trade union instruction and general education for their new officers, who were often hastily nominated; they would have liked the Confederation to have organised its school for the beginning of the current year. But the delay in convening the congress and other material difficulties made this impossible. A beginning, however, has been made of starting courses even during the present year. By an agreement entered into with the Umanitaria Society, the Confederation has acquired the right of nominating pupils for the trade union course.

The Umanitaria Society itself, when it reopened its school, divided it into two branches, offering co-operative and trade union courses. Some courses were attended by all persons joining the school, while special subjects, such as the history and working of the trade union movement, were reserved for trade union workers, and others, such as the history and working of the co-operative movement, for co-operative officers. The arrangement has been repeated this year, and, in addition, the Confederation has taken an active share in arranging the instruction for trades union officers. By the terms of the agreement between the two bodies and of the congress resolutions, the trade union section will next year be placed under the direct management of the Confederation, and only the school for co-operators will remain in the hands of the Umanitaria Society.

The programme which the Confederation proposes to carry out in dealing with the trade union section of the school is very extensive. There will first be the trade union school itself with the curriculum already laid down, of which the results promise to be entirely satisfactory. In course of time it is hoped to establish special courses for works councillors, and for training workers for the control and direct management of industrial establishments. Here a curriculum will be required including a great deal of commercial and technical instruction. A boarding establishment will also have to be set up at some time so that board and lodging may be supplied at reasonable cost to those attending the school from a distance. Meanwhile, affiliated bodies proposing to send

their employees to the labour school will have to contribute to the expense of "students' bursaries" or monthly allowances for their maintenance at Milan while attending the courses. A further proposal has been made to establish affiliated schools in the most important centres in the country, but reserving the position of a second-grade school, or higher finishing institution, to the central school.

The scheme is a large one, and some time will have to elapse before it can be completely realised. Suffice it to say that Italian trade unions have faced the problem of providing general and special education for their members, and that they intend to go far in this direction. This has only become possible owing to their increasing wealth and the great progress which they have made in recent years. The last resolution passed raised the membership subscription of the Confederation to twenty times what it had originally been in 1914 for agricultural workers, namely, from 5 centesimi to 1 lira, and to ten times what it had been for industrial workers, namely, from 10 centesimi also to 1 lira. Resources have therefore grown much more rapidly than numbers, though these also have risen quickly. A few figures will give an approximate idea of the progress which has taken place in course of time. The following table shows the increase in the membership of the Confederation between 1907 and 1920.

	Membership of chambers of labour	Membership of federations	Independent members	Total membership
1907	97,429	65,395	27,598	190,422
1908	144,336	89,957	27,713	262,006
1909	199,599	106,525	1,828	307,925
1910	162,078	194,012	330	356,420
1911	130,185	251,713	1,876	383,770
1912	630,031	244,195	2,445	309,871
1913	83,217	243,217	868	327,302
1914	74,290	245,982	586	320,858
1915	49,506	184,034	323	233,963
1916	40,047	161,164	80	201,291
1917	48,766	181,913	6,881	237,560
1918	59,010	189,477	552	249,039
1919	266,657	892,860	225	1,159,063
1920	438,511	1,888,652	—	2,320,162

The 1920 figures are not final. The figure quoted for the total membership is higher than the real membership; it shows the number of stamps issued and not the number actually paid for, which was the basis adopted for calculation in previous years. It is a fair assumption, however, to estimate that the final figures would give a total membership for the last financial year of somewhere about two millions, which is undoubtedly a respectable figure. Obviously the

total number of organised workers and members of the Confederation has risen enormously in late years. Besides this, figures can be quoted to show a great improvement in organisation. This improvement has been described above; it took the form of an increased concentration of the trade union movement into large federations. The independent associations, i.e. those not affiliated to any federation or chamber of labour, have continually decreased in number until they have become a negligible quantity; and even the number of those members of the Confederation who belong to chambers of labour only, but not to any national federation, has steadily shrunk. The Confederation, in fact, has more and more become an organisation of industrial federations. This does not mean that the chambers have ceased to be important, for the two million members of the Confederation are also distributed among those chambers, about 130 in all, which are at present affiliated to the Confederation, owing to the rule which compels every member of the Confederation to belong both to a federation and to a chamber of labour.

The following sixty federations are at present affiliated to the Confederation :

<i>Headquarters</i>		<i>Name</i>	<i>No. of members</i>
Bologna	Federation of	Agricultural Workers	760,000
"	"	State Employees	49,743
Rome	"	Telegraph Wire Inspectors	5,000
Boiogna	"	Workers in the Sugar & Alcohol industries	5,000
Empoli	"	Glass Blowers	420
Florence	"	Bakers	21,450
"	"	Hospital & Asylum Staffs	8,276
"	"	Postal, Telegraph, & Telephone Employees	(?)
Gallarate	"	Municipal Employees	4,200
Genoa	"	Seamen	(?)
"	"	Port Organisations	8,000
Parma	"	Telephone Employees	600
Milan	"	Private Employees	40,773
"	"	Textile Trades	144,704
"	"	Photo-engravers	400
"	"	Hotel & Restaurant Workers	12,000
"	"	Bottle Makers	1,800
"	"	Electric-lamp and Glass-blowing Workers	2,800
"	"	Chemical Workers	51,000
"	"	Workers in Hides	23,282
"	"	Bookbinders, Papermakers, & Kindred Trades	21,500
"	"	Lithographers	3,000
"	"	Gas Workers	6,728
"	"	Postal, Telegraph, & Telephone Employees	27,500
"	"	Workers in Electrical Establishments	10,000
"	"	Stone Masons	80
"	"	White-glass Workers	1,890
"	"	Teachers	1,630
"	"	Trade Union Employees	200

Mondovi	Federation of	Pottery Workers	3,826
Pisa	" "	Glass Workers	300
"	" "	Window-glass Cutters	6
"	" "	Glass-working Auxiliary Staff	5,000
"	" "	Window-glass Vollers	100
Napies	" "	Foreman Workers, Ministry of War	380
Reggio Emilia	" "	Municipal Employees	13,037
Rome	" "	State Railway Employees	—
"	" "	Railway, Tramway, & In- land Navigation Workers	25,000
"	" "	Italian Tramway Workers	22,000
Turin	" "	Wood Workers	30,000
"	" "	Building Workers	176,426
"	" "	Book-producing Industry Workers	16,000
"	" "	Metal Workers	160,200
Bologna	" "	Gold Workers & Allied Trades	—
"	" "	Inspectresses in Tobacco Manu- facture	623
Modena	" "	Toll-keepers	2,200
Ravenna	" "	Seamen & Inland Navigators	270
Milan	" "	Sleeping-car Staff	—
"	" "	Cut-glass Workers & Kindred Trades	1,022
"	" "	Theatre & Public Entertain- ment Workers	2,025
Rome	" "	Italian Excise Officers	5,400
Milan	" "	Milk & Dairy Workers	1,340
Siena	" "	Miners	8,309
Naples	" "	University Staff	—
Modena	" "	Industrial Monopoly Staffs	402
Rome	" "	Civil State Employees	1,000
"	" "	State Employees & Second Grade Employees	500
Milan	" "	Clothing Trades	2,075
"	" "	Transport Workers	500
S. Giovanni a Teduccio	" "	Preserve Makers	1,000
Total			1,685,976

The financial progress made by the Confederation can be illustrated by a comparison between the budget for the last financial year and some of the pre-war budgets. In 1911 the Confederation had a total income of 55,860 lire, of which 33,215 lire represented subscriptions, 13,443 strike contributions, 2,114 was derived from books and periodical publications, and 7,088 from miscellaneous sources. The outgoings amounted altogether to 52,442 lire. In 1919 the income from subscriptions rose to 579,521 lire, which, with the addition of income from miscellaneous sources, made up a total income of 627,467 lire; the total expenses were 527,059.64 lire, leaving a net balance of 100,407.36 lire. The 1919 membership subscription for all grades of workers was 50 centesimi. The subscription has now been raised to 1 lira; assuming that the membership remains the same, viz. two millions, the Confederation would now have two million lire at its disposal. The federations and chambers have increased

their resources on the same scale and will also be able to contribute to the maintenance of the school, so that the new movement will rest on a solid financial basis.

In conclusion a word should be said as to the executive organs and the internal working of the Confederation. One of the principal difficulties of the Italian trade union movement is due to the absence of one great industrial centre like Paris, London, or Berlin, which would act as a natural focus for labour organisations. The list given above shows that the federations are scattered through the cities all over the country, and since the Confederation is the only connecting link between the organisations, this geographical separation greatly retards the work of the General Council. The Confederation has two headquarters, one at Milan and the other at Rome, but whether its meetings be convened in one city or the other, the Council can never be got together rapidly, because the majority of the members have to travel many miles by rail to reach the place of meeting. This disadvantage might be remedied by placing the headquarters of all the federations in the same town; but, apart from the fact that this would not be easy to carry out, it would only be a half-measure, as only half the General Council is at present constituted of representatives of federations, the other half being representatives of the chambers of labour.

The Confederation having increased so enormously, the congress thought it desirable to raise the number of members on the General Council from 17 to 27, 22 of whom should be elected by the National Council and 5 by the General Council itself as executive officers. The 22 elected members of the Council are chosen as to one half from the representatives of the chambers and as to the other half from the representatives of the federations. The five Secretaries are permanent officers and have a vote on the Council. The Confederation is administered in sections: general policy, enquiries, press, propaganda, social insurance; each of these is under the control of a Secretary.

The above is a sketch in outline of the reforms which have already been introduced, or which are about to be introduced, in the organisation of the Confederation. In part these reforms arise naturally out of the progress made by the workers' movement, and in part they are the result of circumstances of the present day.

