

## "At Last" The Centrists Unite!

(Continued from page 3.)

Centrist one no doubt from the pens of Damon & Co. (Ed.) concerning the overthrow of the capitalist system (note the same mistake that Damon made in his article about the overthrow of the capitalist system. Isn't it more than a coincidence? Ed.) it was insisted that the word "fordible" be added. Likewise, at the first mention of "conquest of political power" it was demanded that there be added "by the use of armed force." One amendment was piled upon another—a veritable "force" panic. (Italics ours, Ed.)

"In vain was it argued that this part of the program contained only preliminary definitions, statements of the goal to be achieved; that the Program, under appropriate sub-divisions, gave full attention to the methods of action; that the term of armed force does not stand by itself but is the inevitable culminating aspect of 'mass action'; that this tactic must be presented in its developmental character—armed uprising as the unavoidable sequence of the advancing class conflict. (Italics ours, Ed.)

"The C. L. P. delegates, for the most part, were ready for a test of strength against the C. P. 'irreconcilables.' They were conscious that this minority would have to accept defeat, since the point to be voted was only on what page something should be stated in the program. Others sensed too much danger of misunderstanding behind such a vote, too much anger where agreement could easily be reached, Caxton (in which we recognize our old friend Y. F.) moved to recommit this part of the Program, then to adjourn. There were some protests, but the union prevailed. Meanwhile the tension relaxed by the brilliant satirical speech of Sherwood, whose Yankee wit was the perfect antidote for passionate argument (reminds us of Oscar Ameringer at the S. P. convention who in every tense situation, was used by the leadership to put the delegates in good humor again, making them forget what was 'trailing' them. Ed.) on an artificially stimulated issue."

How is that for a peaceful "unity session"? Do you get the significance of the whole proceeding in this session? Y. F. characterizes those who justly distinguished him and his Centrist colleagues as "hired scribbles." Notice Y. F.'s contemptuous reference to the "iron of armed force"—such a patly detail. Note how he speaks of "armed uprising as the unavoidable sequence of the advancing class conflict." Here is a Centrist conception which looks upon the "armed conflict" as something to be avoided, if possible but if not, then to get rid of it as of some terrible nightmare. They dread and fear it, coming at last to the revolution, tardily and unwillingly, uncertain in their movements, with the pacifist moral aspect in their attitude toward it and desiring to get rid of it as soon as possible. To the Centrists "armed insurrection" is a "necessary evil"—not something the Communist Party must prepare itself and class-conscious workers for as the highest stage of the class struggle.

But our opportunists of the type of Damon, Y. F. & Co. pay lip-service to the proletarian revolution, mouthe the phrase of "mass action" (which they termed "mass actions" before. Isn't natural for advocates of "mass actions" to unite with the advocates of "action of the masses"? Ed.) and "armed uprising," but in their hearts they are opposed to it—their Centrist activity is for the purpose of delaying this highest stage of the class struggle—and either openly or surreptitiously will retard the working class preparation for this culmination.

As for the "unity session" which was thrown into a "veritable force panic," one thing stands out clear. Many of the delegates, sincerely desiring to meet the issue squarely, having learnt from the "majority" criticism of the "minority" position, were determined that their discredited leaders would not fool them on this issue. Therefore the "force panic." It is a natural outcome where the opportunist leaders are determined to put one over on a convention where some of the delegates at least, know their game. Of course, the net result, as far as the program is concerned, is as Y. F. states. He knows why he criticizes them; he is opposed to the whole thing—and by ridicule he sweeps the whole program inferentially into the refuse.

The writing of "force" into every part of the program does not make it a Communist program—this is something our United Centrists will have to learn. Another lesson they will have to learn is that even a good program in itself does not make the organization really Communist in character—although the clearness and soundness of the Program does give a clue to the clarity and consciousness of the party which frames it. Even a Communist Program with a bunch of opportunist leaders such as Damon, Y. F. & Co.—to lead the organization, expound the principles and tactics, publish its propaganda to the masses would stamp that organization as Centrist—having been thoroughly exposed as opportunists and Centrists in the split.

But as a matter of fact, the program of the United Centrist Party is a poor, mechanically stultified document—"made to suit every antagonistic faction in the convention"—in some parts a poor paraphrasing of fundamentals put together helter-skelter without any idea of correlation of ideas or sequence—in some places vague—in some places taken directly from the C. P.—and the last two columns a reprint from the manifesto of the Third International, where their own efforts evidently had proved fruitless. It might do as a primer for beginners in Communist study classes, after the proper revisions had been made and it had been touched up in general. But as a Program it is a good dissertation!

### PARLIAMENTARISM

On the question of parliamentarism another discussion ensued which showed how far apart the assembled "unity" delegates were on all fundamental questions. They only seemed to agree on the question "unity," all other questions were a "free-for-all-match"—each side giving in a little in order to effect "unity." A sound, uncompromising Communist program was furthest from their minds.

The anti-parliamentarians criticized the "nominations for legislative offices only"—and the "parliamentarians" themselves differed as to whether to nominate for executive and legislative offices or for legislative offices alone. All three groups differed sharply with each other. A year ago this discussion might have been in place. But since the theses on parliamentarism which were issued by the Third International have received such wide publicity in Communist circles everywhere it is characteristic of this "unity" convention that even now they are not clear on the subject.

### INDUSTRIAL UNIONISM

The third day came the longest and most stubborn debate of the whole convention on the question of Industrial Unionism and I. W. W. On this question there were also three groups—one group who stood for outright endorsement of the I. W. W. (in spite of the recent convention decisions of the I. W. W.), another group who were ready to give it a limited endorsement, and a third group who believed neither in a direct endorsement of the

I. W. W. nor in an outright condemnation of the A. F. of L.

Finally, the (former) Chicago District Committee's resolution on this question was adopted which gave an outright endorsement of the I. W. W. But again, in order to maintain harmony and "unity" the convention reconsidered the matter and amended it to please all three factions. The result is that their position on I. W. W. is neither fish, flesh, fowl nor good red herring. It has one merit however, which the "unity" convention is satisfied with—and that is, it prevented another "split" at the convention.

**PARTY NAME ALMOST LEADS TO A SPLIT**  
Then came the question of a party name—and again fratricide, overtaken "unity" was nearly smashed into pieces. After thirty votes had been cast for "Communist Party" on a roll call vote (our former "minority" tried their best to bring confusion into the Communist Party by adopting our name)—which meant that the name was adopted—the C. L. P. raised a loud holler, and what Y. F. calls "the moral power of effective minority criticism" and what we call the deadly fear of a deadlock and a split, won the day. The question, like all the others was reconsidered and a new motion re-introduced to placate all elements. "United" was added and the dove of peace again hovered benignly over the "unity convention."

Thus far, on the question of reconsidering passed motions the "battling average" of the "unity convention" was 1,000 per cent.

As a balm to the wounded feelings and the suspicions of the C. L. P. they were permitted to retain their emblem.

### CONSTITUTION-MAKING

Then came the discussion of the constitution. Two questions occupied them—one centralization, the other, federations. The question of underground organization was not apparently discussed for nowhere is there a mention of it in the Constitution. On the question of centralization two main groups stood out. One group apparently headed by Damon & Co. (who now talks of giving the C. E. C. full power to elect and control the party officials—some hypocrisy!) and the other group composed of the C. L. P. whose conception of Communist organizations had not advanced from the bourgeois democratic ideology of the S. P. Note their arguments: "Lack of confidence in officials was the central theme of the contrary argument. (If they mean their own opportunist leaders we don't blame them—but then why didn't they remain in the S. P., since there is little to choose between the opportunist leaders of the Right and the Centre—in fact, it is easier to fight the Right leaders because they are out in open, but the Centrist leaders who lean toward the Left, as Lenin said are the most dangerous. Ed.) The party affairs, it was urged, must be brought nearer to the control of the rank and file. The central committee had been the breeding place of factional controversies. It was not asking too much to give the district committees a veto in the choice of the organizers upon whom their work depended." (Italics ours, Ed.)

Nothing can show the Centrist character of the "unity convention" better than the italicized quoted statement, about "the central committees being the breeding places of factional controversies." As a matter of fact, the whole paragraph is the C. L. P. echo of Left Wingers who "left" the S. P., not because of a fundamental difference in principles and tactics, but because they were opposed to the S. P. machine, to the steam-roller methods of the Right-Wing, to the crooks and scoundrels among the officialdom.

But perhaps lest you think that the other side really believed in revolutionary centralization, we hasten to dispel such an idea. Their policy is half-and-half. On paper the C. E. C. is the highest body between conventions, collects all the dues, publishes all the papers, etc., etc. but actually, each district holds its own conventions to legislate for itself and elect its District Committee. The C. E. C. organization machine extends only as far as the District Organizers, then it stops and meets the machine built up in the various sections, sub-districts and districts. In other words, there are two machines in their party. A C. E. C. machine and a "democratic" machine, slow, cumbersome and unwieldy. The friction between these two machines must lead to paralysis of work, disagreements, appeals, counter-appeals, etc. In case of serious friction in the organization, each District Committee can do as it pleases even to the extent of bolting the organization. Having abolished language federations, the C. E. C. has no effective counter-check against the possible machinations of any organized group within the party.

But even this half-and-half measure of centralization was won only after the most stubborn fight. At first the proposition was defeated. Of course, it was reconsidered and re-introduced. It took three roll-calls for it finally to pass.

### LANGUAGE FEDERATIONS DISPOSED OF

We now come to the question of language federations. Y. F.'s report is interesting in this connection so we quote: "On the federation question the Joint Committee had come to no agreement. In curious contrast to the history of last summer, it was the C. L. P. committee members who were loath to take a rigorous stand against federations. At the convention the C. L. P. delegates took no group stand on this question. Two plans were presented, one for the C. P. delegates by Damon (remember Damon's insistence that he was not opposed to federations—that he did not want to abolish them but only to change their method of paying dues?) the other by Dubner and Raphaeloff for the federation members of the C. L. P. The debate was largely between the federation delegates on both sides. The principal controversy was as to the existence of national executive committees for the language groups, this proposal being decisively voted down."

Anyone who reads the United Centrist constitution about language federations will quickly realize that the object behind the abolition of the federations was not to make for greater centralization, as they claim, but for the purpose of effectively closing the channel of organized expression and control of the vast majority of the "foreign comrades" who cannot speak or understand English, over the actions of the opportunist leaders of the United Centrist Party of America. This undoubtedly is the purpose. But the opportunist leaders composed of Damon & Co. have evidently ridden to a fall. Note that the C. L. P., which had experience with the federation question for nearly a year, had changed its policy, or rather was willing to change its policy. They know by bitter experience, that the "foreign comrades" who cannot speak or understand English, must have a centralized body of their own, which can function for them, else, they drift away, lose interest in the party, or veer away from Communism gradually and are swallowed up in other movements.

It will not be very long before Damon & Co. find this out for themselves and then they will, we can safely predict (knowing the character of these men) that the C. E. C. will change the convention decision or make it a dead letter, and permit language federations to exist in their party.

Just as their program is "a scrap of paper" so is their constitution a "scrap of paper." Nor are they afraid of conventions. They can defy conventions and when it gets too hot, split away

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## Counter-Revolution in Germany

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fortunately, only in an objective sense. The proletariat was unarmed, while its representatives manifested neither revolutionary initiative nor political capacity. The fundamental task was to issue the call and develop measures for the arming of the proletariat; no such call was issued or measures adopted during the first four days of the General Strike—the decisive period, during which the basis had to be laid for all subsequent action.

But elsewhere the revolutionary struggle flared up. Where the workers were armed they initiated a struggle for power, and usurped power in other places they disarmed the troops as a preliminary to the struggle for power. In city after city Soviet Republics were proclaimed; while in the Ruhr a giant revolutionary struggle loomed threateningly. Among these workers the military coup was a call to action, the opportunity to conquer power. It was the elemental action of the masses breaking loose, in spite of the dangers, in spite of the Party moderates and compromisers. These vital developments indicated that both the Reaction and the Revolution had completely underestimated the German proletariat; the Reaction—its capacity to resist a military dictatorship; the Revolution—its will to engage in the struggle for power.

The menace of Bolshevism, which the Kapp-Lüttwitz dictatorship in its first proclamation and projected as a bogey, was now a real menace. To continue the struggle between the Government and the coup meant to prepare the conditions for the revolutionary conquest of power by the proletariat. What was necessary now was agreement and compromise, unity against the Revolution. The danger was very real. Hindenburg appealed to Kapp-Lüttwitz to withdraw from Berlin, and to the Government for compromise and agreement. Now the strategy of the Socialist-bourgeois Government was apparent—in avoiding the decisive military struggle against the coup, the opportunity was provided for agreement and unity against the Revolution. The opportunity was seized at the earliest moment.

It is a fact, in spite of denials, that the Government was negotiating with the Kapp-Lüttwitz dictatorship. On Wednesday these negotiations resulted in an agreement. On Monday the Kapp-Lüttwitz dictatorship had announced negotiations, and stated its conditions: "Elections to be held two months hence for the Reichstag and the Prussian Landtag; a new President to be elected, the former President to be requested to continue office until the elections." This declaration was denied by the Government and the National Assembly; but the agreement was concluded two days later, practically on the Kapp-Lüttwitz conditions. On Wednesday the Kapp-Lüttwitz dictatorship declared that having accomplished its mission, the old Government agreeing (1) that elections should be held within two months and (2) election of the President to be direct vote of the people, it would withdraw. This was not accepting the program of the coup, but it was a partial victory, and moreover, the Kapp-Lüttwitz troops withdrew from Berlin with all the honors of war, to the strains of the martial music and assisted in their evacuation by the Government troops; carrying with them, moreover, an enormous mass of captured munitions. A proclamation characterized the agreement in this fashion: "After long negotiations between the representatives of the Government parties and representatives of both Right parties (which had recognized the Kapp-Lüttwitz dictatorship), especially between representatives Trimborn, Sudekum, Gothen, Strassman and Herdt, the following compromise has been reached: The representatives of the majority parties will advocate elections to the National Assembly to take place not later than June; that the President be elected by the people; that the National Government will undergo a change in the near future, the carrying on of the business of Government in Berlin to be taken over by vice-Chancellor Schiffer." At 12:15 Thursday morning, Schiffer issued a proclamation in the name of the Government, designating General Seckt as commander of the troops and calling for restoration of economic and political activity. (A joint proclamation by Schiffer and Hirsch (Social-Democrat) in the name of the National and Prussian Governments declared it was false to accuse the National Army and the Security (Noske) troops of offering no resistance to the coup, and has this delicious bit: "It is not commonly known that on the night of Friday-Saturday (March 12-13) the troops stood at their posts ready to defend the Government; but, because of the difficult conditions of night fighting, they were, before the advance of the rebels, re-called to barracks.")

Simultaneously with the conclusion of the compromise, the Government and the bourgeois parties issued the slogan: "Back to work." The paralysis of the economic activity united with the menace of Bolshevism to compel a compromise. But the proletariat of Berlin rejected the call to end the strike, the trades unions and the Social-Democratic Party being compelled to order the strike to proceed against the compromise.

The General Strike was now, in its impulse and in the mood of the masses, a strike against the Government. But, in the conscious direction imparted to it by the trades union bureaucracy and S. D. P., the strike was against the compromise of the Government—purposely or stupidly evading the problem, in that the compromise was not in a formal agreement but in the prevailing situation itself; the Government might repudiate the formal agreement, but would inevitably be compelled to compromise, as actually did happen.

The compromise agreed upon by the Government and the military coup, the masses persisting in the General Strike, now in fact a strike against the Government—these developments emphasized the inherent character of the crisis, as developing the conditions and providing the opportunity for the definite Communist struggle for power.

It was clear to all that the continuation of the General Strike was latent with the threat of proletarian revolution. On Thursday and Friday the citizens of Berlin acted as in mortal terror; the words Spartacus, Arbeiter, Unabhaengigen, were on all tongues and the basis of discussion in all circles. At night, stores and hotels were barred and people ordered off the streets; terror was rampant in Berlin. The Government troops now occupied the entrenchments erected by the Kapp-Lüttwitz troops and new entrenchments were erected. Riots were frequent, the government troops using rifles and machine guns at the least pretext; in three days more persons were shot by the government troops than in the five days of the Kapp-Lüttwitz dictatorship. In the proletariat a new energy manifested itself, a developing consciousness of larger means and purposes. But the General Strike did not move to Revolution, nor was it the masses who were not ready, but the representatives of the masses...

Never were the limitations of the General Strike in itself more apparent than in Berlin. The strike was complete; for eight days not a factory nor a car was in motion. But in spite of all this, the strike broke and dispersed after unsatisfactory promises of concessions by the Government...