

The MILITANT

Semi-Monthly Organ of the Opposition Group in the Workers (Communist) Party of America

"It is necessary that every member of the Party should study calmly and with the greatest objectivity, first the substance of the differences of opinion, and then the development of the struggles within the Party. Neither the one nor the other can be done unless the documents of both sides are published. He who takes somebody's word for it is a hopeless idiot, who can be disposed of with a simple gesture of the hand."—Lenin

VOL. 1—NO. 2.

NEW YORK, N. Y., DECEMBER 1, 1928.

PRICE 5 CENTS

The Party "Discussion" Opens!

by James P. Cannon

AFTER not a little delay, occasioned by the customary cabling back and forth, by cabled appeals of protest by the Foster group which were rejected over the same cables, the statement of the Lovestone-Pepper C.E.C. on our declaration and expulsion was published in the Daily Worker on November 16th.

The statement of the Party majority covers much paper, but it had no space to answer the criticisms of the Opposition on a single point. Our declaration raised principle questions. They answered with an administrative instruction to the party to expel all those who share our views. We said, what everyone knows, that the questions have never been discussed and we demanded a discussion. They replied "the discussion is closed." We said the position of the Russian Opposition has been correct on all important questions; we gave reasons for our statement and demanded the right to defend these views in the pre-convention discussion prescribed by the Party constitution. They disposed of this political proposal with legalistic references to the decisions of the Communist International.

Such, in brief, is the political content of the long-delayed and much labored-over statement of the Lovestone-Pepper faction which, by grace of Bucharin, constitutes the majority of our Central Executive Committee. We might add that, as an extraordinary concession on their part (and considering the fact that the Party members had already read it in *The Militant*) they printed our statement to the Polcom, including even a paragraph, which we, for Party reasons, had thought best to eliminate from publication.

They merely recite that the C.I. has decided against the Trotsky platform—a fact which everybody knew before—and pass that off for an answer to the principle arguments of the Opposition. The merits of the decision of the C.I., which all Communists have a right and duty to discuss and which is the real point of dispute, are not touched by one word in the statement. Thus the pedagogical overseers show their contemptuous estimate of the Party members. They do not consider it necessary for the Party comrades to know for themselves the issues involved. The party comrades are merely informed of the decisions—discussion is not allowed.

The bureaucrats who rule by decree set up a conception of the Comintern which Lenin never knew. Instead of a living body of revolutionaries, generalizing from world experience, as Lenin conceived the Comintern, they want to palm it off as an institution which decides while the Party members need only to be informed of the decisions. The teachings of Marx and Lenin on the centralized international organization of the Communist workers are completely lost in such a conception.

In this caricature of Leninism the Communist who knows for himself and defends his position because he knows is thrown aside in favor of the one who does not know and asks no questions. In such a scheme there is no recognition of the possibilities of errors and no provision for a correction of them. Tomorrow they will go a step further—indeed they have already started on this path—and attempt to establish the same relationship between the Party members and the C.E.C. of the Party. Then the Foster group which is now helping to establish this principle which denies our right to criticize the decisions of the Comintern, will be repaid for "faithful service" in the form of an instruction to cease criticism of the decisions of the C.E.C. regardless of the errors contained in them—the greater the error the less the right to criticize. As for the ordinary worker in the Party ranks who has no faction behind him, his right to open his mouth ceased long ago.

"The Communist Party is not a debating society." Behind this statement, true enough in itself all the bureaucrats who fear discussion seek to hide their incompetence. We Communists are not a

group of interminable debaters. Neither are we an army of voting robots. The automatic hand raiser is no Communist any more than the undisciplined, endless talker. The one of these conceptions is just as far away from Leninism as the other. We hold to the principle of democratic centralism just as firmly as we reject the suppression of discussion and the substitution of official commands for ideological and political leadership.

The great principle questions raised by the Russian Opposition—questions of decisive importance for the whole future of the world proletarian revolution—have never been fairly and fully discussed in any party of the Comintern, including our own party, and, consequently, have been decided wrongly. This is the essence of the matter, which the statement of the Lovestone majority ignores entirely, because it is fatal for their whole case.

The party comrades do not know the issues from all sides and cannot know them for the reason that the material of the Opposition was not published—it was suppressed. There has been no real and serious discussion in the party—it was prohibited. The Communist militants who have had the opportunity to read the documents and learn the truth are not allowed to speak within the party—they are expelled.

The Foster group which had the honor of carrying the "information" against us to Lovestone and Pepper, received their reward in the statement: a condescending pat on the back, which was no doubt appreciated, even if it was accompanied by a rough box on the ear, to say nothing of a number of boots to the bottom.

The difficulties of the Foster group arise out of the contradictions in its position. It is claimed

Swabeck, Glotzer Join Opposition; Expelled

The forces of the Opposition were immeasurably strengthened last Saturday by the formal adhesion of a powerful group of Communist fighters in Chicago, headed by Arne Swabeck and Al Glotzer. In a statement addressed to all Party and League members these two comrades, the outstanding Chicago leaders in the Party and Young Workers League, declared their unconditional support of the platform of the Opposition and their solidarity with all comrades expelled for these views. On the presentation of their statement at a meeting of the Chicago D.E.C. on Saturday, November 24, they were also declared expelled from the Party together with comrades Mike Zalisko, Sidney Borgeson and Helen Judd. Wholesale expulsions of other comrades in Chicago are being prepared. The Chicago membership has been profoundly shaken by these events.

Comrade Swabeck, as is well known, is one of the foremost American Communists. He is one of the founders of the Party and has been a member of the Central Executive Committee for many years. He is the leader of the Left Wing in the Chicago Federation of Labor and was the director of the mining campaign of the Party. He was District Organizer of the Chicago district from the days of the underground Party till his removal by the Lovestone faction last year. Comrade Glotzer is one of the outstanding leaders of the Young Workers League and a member of its National Executive Committee.

Other sensational developments along this line are expected within the coming week.

that Christ wrought miracles but we do not believe that even he ever succeeded in riding two horses going in opposite directions at the same time. The Foster group took a forward step when it united with us in the fight against the right wing (joint fight against the Panken "maneuver", common platform at the February and May Plenary meetings of the Central Executive Committee, common platform on "the Right Danger in the American Party", etc.) Its failure to develop the international implications of our common opposition stand, its failure to see that the problems of our party and the fight against its right wing leadership are indissolubly bound up with the Bolshevik fight of the Russian Opposition, arrested the forward development of the Foster group and prepared the ground for its disintegration. Its pitiful, if short-lived, attempt to outdo the opportunist leadership in demagoguery against the Russian Opposition and against us only sharpened its contradictions and made its whole position politically impossible. Those who do not stand clearly on principles, foresee their implications and understand their logic are bound to play a sorry role when principle questions are placed on the agenda.

The resolution of the District Executive Committee of New York, under the direct inspiration of the Central Executive Committee majority, demands that the Foster opposition repudiate the statement on "the Right Danger in the American Party" if it really wants to fight "Trotskyism" and logically so. The Lovestone-Pepper group of opportunists represents on an American scale what the opportunist opponents and calumniators of the Russian opposition represent on a Russian and international scale. The Lovestone faction leaders are merely the American representatives of the anti-Trotsky faction in the Communist International and have been imposed upon the party by it. They are not and can never be leaders of our party in their own right. On the other hand, the course of the American Opposition, insofar as it develops consistently, merges with the path of the Russian Opposition. This is the logic of the whole situation. Between these two stools there is no place to sit.

The Foster group, by its present policy, weakens itself, strengthens the right wing leadership and confuses the party. They take part, shame-faced and utterly contemptible, in the obscene lynching campaign against us, saying we have no right to oppose the decision of the Communist International on the Russian questions. The right wing leaders retort: "Very good. We appreciate your help in lynching and expelling Communists by wholesale, but the same rule you are supporting applies to you also. You have no right to oppose the decision of the Communist International on the American question. Your own expulsion is next on the agenda!"

And why should they not speak this way? Is there some secret paragraph of the statutes of the Communist International which says that the decision on the Russian question is sacred and may not even be discussed under penalty of expulsion, while the decision on the American question may be opposed with impunity? These decisions are to a large extent bound together. For our part we are against both and openly say so.

We have no doubt that the overwhelming majority of the supporters of the Foster group—above all its proletarian and non-bureaucratized section—will soon find the right way out of the present dilemma. In the interest of the party, the sooner the better. The first step on this path will be to break with the tactic of trailing after the expulsion policy of the right wing splitters and to take up the struggle against it.

The statement of the CEC majority says: "We feel confident—on the basis of our experiences during the attack of the government in 1919-20, when the party was driven underground—that the core of the party and its leadership are sound."

This can be said only with certain qualifica-