

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

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Our Appeal to the Party Members

Comrades:—

Many of the most important events and turning points in our Party life have been summed up in Party gatherings which stand out in Party history as the expression of these events. The present meeting of the Central Executive Committee, called to confirm the control of the Party by an opportunistic and bureaucratic leadership and to endorse the expulsion of its opponents, is such a gathering. It will represent in Party history a downward curve.

In most of the significant Party meetings of the past certain features, certain details, stood out and gave in themselves an indication of the whole character of the gatherings. This is true also of this one. Let me mention a couple of these characteristic features of the present meeting of the Central Executive Committee.

We were impressed as we entered the hall to see comrade Devine occupying the post as chairman—a new distinction for him—and you have all heard him tell us with a brusque authority—which is also new for him—that we will be given one hour and no more to answer the three hour reports against us. The chairmanship of comrade Devine will not be forgotten for it is a symbol of the meeting. He is the District Organizer in that District (Minnesota) where the expulsion of proletarian Communists for their views has attained the widest proportions. Twenty-one comrades there have already been expelled, and they are precisely the comrades whose names have stood out in the labor movement of Minnesota for years as the very banner of Communism. The prestige our Party enjoys in the labor movement there is due mainly to them. And it is to their loyal, untiring and sacrificial work that we owe the 5,000 votes—more than 10 per cent of the total votes for our Presidential candidates—which we received in the elections in Minnesota. The election of comrade Devine, who is responsible for the expulsion of these Communists, as chairman of the Plenum has a meaning in the light of those facts. It signifies the conferring of exceptional honors upon the District Organizers who bring about the greatest disruption. It puts the seal of approval upon the policy of mass expulsions of proletarian Communists. Thus the chairmanship of Devine is a symbol of the Plenum.

PEPPER REPORTS AGAINST US

The second significant detail I wish to mention is the selection of Pepper as the Reporter against us. This fact epitomizes the Plenum, and the whole issue around which it centers, better than anything we could say. It demonstrates in deed that the fight against us, because it lacks all principle, must be placed from the beginning on the lowest basis and must use the vilest instruments. The selection of Pepper, the bearer in the Communist movement of all that is most corrupt and most detestable to revolutionaries, as the Reporter against us, to bring here the demand for our expulsion in itself discredits that demand. The very fact that the sewage of slander against us and our comrades is poured out officially here through the mouth of Pepper puts an evaluation on this slander, it answers and refutes it. I will not insult a single Communist by "defending" him against the accusations of this characterless adventurer whose unspeakable record shames the Communist movement of the world. The Communist militants who constitute the forces of the Opposition, with the honorable record of the years behind them, are in no need of such a defense. For revolutionaries the calumny of a Pepper is only a mark of distinction and a badge of honor. It is those who elected Pepper as the Reporter against us who will have need of this defense before the Party and before the proletariat which judges the Party by its spokesmen.

In the period that has intervened since our expulsion on October 25th, we have continued to regard ourselves as Party members and have conducted ourselves as Communists, as we have done

(SPEECH OF JAMES P. CANNON AT THE PLENARY SESSION OF THE CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, WORKERS (COMMUNIST) PARTY, MONDAY, DECEMBER 17, 1928.)

..... since the foundation of the Party and even for years before that. Every step we have taken has been guided by this conception. Those acts which went beyond the bounds of ordinary Party procedure in bringing our views before the Party, was imposed upon us by the action of the Party leadership in denying us the right and opportunity to defend our views within the Party by normal means. Our views relate to principle questions, and therefore, it is our duty openly to defend them in spite of all attempts to suppress them. We are bound to do this also in the future under all circumstances. However, we said on October 25th and we repeat now, that we are unconditionally willing to confine our activity to regular Party channels and to discontinue all extraordinary methods the moment our Party rights are restored and we are permitted to defend our views in the Party press and at Party meetings. The decision and the responsibility rest wholly with the majority of the Central Executive Committee.

FOR THE RUSSIAN OPPOSITION

Events since our expulsion have only served to confirm more surely the correctness of the views of the Russian Opposition which we support. The momentous developments in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and throughout the Comintern have that meaning and no other. Life itself is proving the validity of their platform. Even those who fought that platform, who misrepresented it and hid it from the Party and the Comintern, are today compelled, under the pressure of events and forces which overwhelm them, to give lip-service to it, to pretend to adopt it. Many of the statements and proposals of the Opposition which were branded as "counter-revolutionary" a year ago are today solemnly repeated, almost word for word, as the quintessence of Bolshevism. Meanwhile their sponsors—the true leaders and defenders of the Russian Revolution—remain in exile and there is no guarantee whatever that the present advertized "left course" will mean anything more than a cover for further concessions to the Right wing whose policy directly undermines the dictatorship. The victorious fight of the Party masses in Russia and throughout the Comintern against this disgraceful and dangerous course cannot be much longer postponed.

(Note: Here followed an exposition of various parts of the platform of the Russian Opposition

The Truth About
TROTSKY
AND THE
Russian Opposition
A LECTURE BY
JAMES P. CANNON
AT THE
LABOR TEMPLE

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which are connected with the present developments, such as the internal questions of the Soviet Union, the crisis in the Communist Party of Germany, etc., etc. Since these questions are being elaborated in separate articles in The Militant this part of the speech is deleted to avoid repetition.)

Our views on the problems of the American Party and its leadership outlined in our statement to the Political Committee on October 25th hold good today and have been underscored by the whole conduct of the Pepper-Lovestone faction since that time. We spoke then of "its opportunist political outlook, its petty-bourgeois origin, its corrupt factionalism, its careerism and adventurism in the class struggle" as "the greatest menace to the Party." To speak now about the present Party leadership, with objectivity and precision, we could not use different language to characterize it. This estimate is written in unmistakable words in the election campaign, the trade union work, the inner-Party regime and in all phases of Party life and activity.

BUREAUCRACY AND GANGSTERISM

Since October 25th, the Pepper-Lovestone leadership has taken further steps on the course of bureaucratic disruption which confronts the Party today as a deadly menace—a course which began with the expulsion of Communists, copied from the labor fakers, and which has already taken another weapon from the same arsenal—the weapon of gangsterism. Everyone sitting here knows the facts about this. You know that inspired and organized gangster attacks have been made against us on the public streets, not once but several times.

Woe to the Party of the workers if its proletarian kernel does not arise and stamp out these incipient fascist tactics at the very beginning. The blows from the black-jacks of gangsters which have descended on the heads of Opposition Communists are blows at the very foundation of the Party. This abominable gangsterism, for which the leaders of the two factions collaborating against us, the Lovestone faction and the Foster faction, are directly responsible, is hated by every honest worker. It discredits the Party before the working class and threatens to deprive the Party of its moral and political position in the struggle against these methods of the trade union reactionaries.

Only the blindest bureaucrat, or the most irresponsible dilettante adventuring in the movement, can fail to see the unbounded consequences of the bureaucratic expulsion policy of the Lovestone-Pepper leadership and react with alarm against it. It directly threatens the existence of the Party. The first step was the expulsion of three members of the Central Executive Committee in the futile hope that the issues could thereby be disposed of. But the very next day these issues arose again in a wider circle as a result of the action against us and called forth new expulsions. In the six weeks which have elapsed since that time more than sixty proletarians have been expelled from the Party for their views and glibly denounced as "renegades" and "counter-revolutionaries" by people who are scarcely worthy to criticize them in any respect.

Bureaucratic suppression has its own logic. It begins with the expulsion of individuals and ends with the disruption of the movement. Yesterday we saw the attempt to suppress the views of the Oppositionists who fight the Party regime on principle grounds. Today already inspired resolutions from the Party units are making the same demand against the limited criticisms of the Foster group, with the threat of organizational measures after the packed and gerrymandered convention has "endorsed" the regime. Bureaucratism is alien to the proletarian Communist movement. Bureaucratism cannot stand criticism. It cannot stand discussion. Bureaucratism, which is an expression of bourgeois influence, and Lenin's proletarian doctrine cannot live together.

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