

The MILITANT

Semi-Monthly Organ of the Opposition Group in the 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. II, No. 6.

NEW YORK, N. Y., MARCH, 15, 1929.

PRICE 5 CENTS

The Results of the Party Convention

By James P. Cannon

The Party Convention which was to "end the factional struggle and unify the Party" ended with a free-for-all fist fight, the sharpening of the internal strife, the wide distribution of new caucus documents and a race to Moscow by representatives of both factions. It could not be otherwise. This bankruptcy is only the reflection of the political and ideological collapse of the Stalinist regime in the Communist International, a regime which stultifies revolutionary thought, suppresses discussion and undertakes to solve all difficulties which arise from its barren policy with organizational manipulations. The unanimous endorsement of the Stalin leadership by the Convention was an appropriate act.

The convention sessions themselves were an empty formality. The real activity consisted of a long series of caucuses by the two factions and was confined almost exclusively to the paltry struggle over the office of Party Secretary. The mechanical exclusion of the Opposition prevented a discussion of the great principle questions which confront the Communist International and which lie at the bottom of the fierce factional struggles in all the parties. The convention delegates, carefully selected from the standpoint of their indifference to these questions, naturally could not touch them—they do not even understand them—and this failure doomed the convention to ignominious futility from the start. Without facing these issues, which are the determining factor in the whole Comintern, and taking part in the effort to solve them on the right basis of principle, there can be no "liquidation of the factional struggle" no matter how often the "unprincipledness" of this struggle is proclaimed.

THE "ISSUE" AT THE CONVENTION

Almost the entire activity of the two caucuses—which met in joint session occasionally as the Sixth Convention of the Party—was devoted to the manoeuvre of Stalin which was presented by the two representatives of the Executive Committee of the Communist International: the proposal that Foster should be appointed Secretary of the Party. The fact that a secondary organization question of this kind should become the central problem of the convention is in itself a significant characterization of the gathering. The motive behind this Stalin strategy is quite obvious. In the first place it was a form of pressure on the Lovestone faction to make a complete break with Bucharin. It was also designed to graft Foster onto the Lovestone faction as its "American" expression and decoy for the proletarian communists who are fighting it under the banner of the Communist Opposition. It was easy to accomplish the first aim, for here it was a question of dealing with people without definite principles or loyalties. The second aim had no chance to succeed. It failed to consider the principle motives that animate the proletarian supporters of the Opposition and it underestimated their political intelligence.

The reactions of the two groups in the Convention to this proposal regarding the secretaryship throw an interesting light on their actual character. The Bittleman group went into convulsions of enthusiasm over it and regarded it as, almost, the "final victory." For it they completely forgot their "political line," they scrapped their Convention theses, they declared a still more "merciless" struggle against the Communist Opposition and howled for "unity" with the "Right Wing"—with Lovestone, Pepper, Wicks, Stachel, Wolfe, Minor, Olgin or anyone else of a similar stripe who would accept it. How can such an attitude be explained? It is only a few weeks ago that Bittleman issued a statement, signed also by a number of lieutenants and new recruits, repudiating Foster's position on very important questions from a principle standpoint. Foster himself stated in his article that Bittleman had denounced his position as "liquidating everything connected with Communism." Foster

articles reaffirmed his stand as against that of Bittleman and all the rest of the group. How then can the appointment of Foster be regarded as such a great "concession" to the Bittleman faction that everything else can be cheerfully sacrificed? The incident demonstrates quite clearly that organization positions play the main role in this case and that the "theses" (cast aside so soon and so lightly) and the big talk about "political line" (forgotten already) were merely trimmings. What kind of a group is this which divides over political questions and reunites over organization questions?

THE MOBILIZATION AGAINST FOSTER

The attitude of the Lovestone group to the Stalin Manoeuvre was more business-like, practical and "political" in the Stalinist sense. They took away its main motive by introducing a resolution for Stalin and against Bucharin,—thus refuting at the same time the accusation that they are purely and simply a "Right Wing." They can also be "Center" or "Left" if occasion demands. Their next step was to discredit the proposal to make Foster Secretary of the Party. For this they put forward their "proletarian" delegations to attack Foster's war record openly in the Convention. The

article signed by W. J. White in the Daily Worker of March 4th was part of this campaign and Poor White of course did not write the article. It is quite obvious that Bedacht and Lovestone wrote it. "Where was the 'leader' of the opposition during the past war?" asks the article. "Does his record in the past war assure reliability in the coming war? It does not." With words like these and others even more blunt and outspoken on the convention floor the carefully coached "proletarians" hammered at the candidacy of Foster for the secretaryship. Thus the Lovestone caucus was solidified against the "War Danger" and Foster. They finished by electing three secretaries with equal rights, one of whom is Foster in the same position he held before the Convention and with even less prestige.

The Bittleman-Foster caucus document accuses the Lovestone faction, because of its rejection of Foster as Secretary, of placing the Convention "in the position of open hostility to the C.I."—that is, to the Stalin faction. But that doesn't follow at all—the wish probably influences the thought that thereby they would receive the favors that come only to the "loyal" ones. They didn't understand Lovestone's manoeuvre any more than they understood Stalin's. It is absurd to think the Lovestone-

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New York Workers Protest Trotsky's Exile Stalinites Plan Pogrom -- and Stage Fizzle

The protest meeting of the Communist workers of New York against the banishment of Trotsky was held with a packed hall at Labor Temple Tuesday night and ended with great enthusiasm and loud cheers for Trotsky and the Communist Opposition at 11.30. A collection of \$60.50 for the Weekly Militant was taken after an admission fee of 25 cents at the door. Cannon, Abern and Shahtman were the speakers. The names of the Workers Guard who protected the meeting are too numerous to mention. Those who attempted to disrupt the meeting from the inside left so quickly that their names could not be learned. Those who were known to have come to carry out the instructions of the Stalin bureaucrats to break up the meeting—mainly paid functionaries—were refused admission by the Workers Guard at the door and were given the opportunity to denounce "Trotskyism" to their hearts' content in the wide open spaces of 14th Street.

A committee from the I.W.W. sat on the platform with the speakers and Fellow Worker Edelman spoke in their name, pledging the support of the I.W.W. workers to maintain the right of Free Speech for the Communist Opposition notwithstanding their disagreement with its program. A number of I.W.W. workers also served on the Workers Guard which defended the meeting. Dr. Edmund Chaffee of the American Civil Liberties Union also spoke, pointing out that the A.C.L.U. had always defended the right of the Party to hold public meetings and would do the same for the Communist Opposition.

Shortly after the meeting began, while comrade Abern was speaking, a group of Lovestone scouts attempted to force entrance at the rear door and rush the platform. They ran into a strong detachment of the Workers Guard which was concentrated at that point and were soon thrown out. The leader of this raid, one Gomez, had foolishly bumped his head against the door and seemed to be under the illusion that Trotsky was in the hall in the act of betraying the Soviet Union. He was allowed to remain and to wander around the room at will, but after a few feeble heckles, he left the meeting of his own accord. The class struggle had been declared off for the night by the Stalin officialdom of the Party and instructions were sent to all Party units to mobilize the entire Party membership to break up our meeting. Preparations were made to stage a pogrom against the Opposition, but it was a pitiful fiasco. Its net result was to demonstrate the futility of these methods and the weakness of their sponsors, to strengthen the fighting spirit of the Opposition workers and to create the beginning of a united front of all progressive workers against fascist methods in the labor movement—from the side of Lovestone and Foster as well as from the side of Sigman and Lewis.

The subsidized liars of the Daily Worker and Freiheit, striving to win the Brass Check medal for 1929,

give an account of the meeting that will not be recognized by anyone who attended it. Among other things they say that we (we!) brought police to the meeting and "gave orders" to them. These people whose leader, Lovestone, testified in a capitalist court against a Communist and helped to send him to the penitentiary, cannot imagine why we should not call the police. Their accusation, therefore, is perhaps as much instinctive reaction as conscious falsehood.

The director of the Labor Temple announced from the platform that he had called the police against our protest and said he had done so because of the riot at the previous meeting. The police wanted to let the hoodlums into the hall, but our Workers Guard at the door refused. It is very important to establish the facts about such questions, and for that reason we asked representatives of the I.W.W. and the A.C.L.U. to attend the meeting to observe and give an opinion of the conduct of all concerned. Lies against us in general are too numerous to answer but lies about the police business will be checked down to their roots and the real facts clearly established to the satisfaction of all honest workers.

One final lie of the Stalinite press. We are accused of having had gangsters and thugs at the meeting to protect us. These "gangsters and thugs" were, every one of them, fighters in the revolutionary movement and fresh from the picket line in the needle trades Left Wing fight and other battles where their only connection with gangsters was to be beaten and slashed by the thugs employed by the Right Wing. The day after they are cheered for their courage on the picket line, the Daily Worker and Freiheit denounce them as "thugs." The Stalinite scribblers have lost all sense of shame.

A successful meeting was also held in Philadelphia on St. Patrick's Day with James P. Cannon speaking. The meeting was under the auspices of the Open Forum of the Friendship Liberal League, where Party representatives have often spoken. There was a "mobilization of the Party" to break up the meeting which ended in a fizzle and brought discredit on the Stalinites. The disruption was organized by Benjamin, the district organizer of the Party, but only a dozen or so Party members could be mustered for the job. (This is true in all cities; the working class core of the Party has no heart for these reactionary methods.) Benjamin, who is as yellow as the yolk of an egg, remained two miles behind the lines like a real general. There he eventually received reports that his hoodlums had hit the sidewalk a few minutes after the trouble began. The meeting continued, with questions and discussion, till midnight.

Two smashing defeats for Stalinism in three days! The Opposition will be heard!