

The Labor Revolt in the South

The revolt of the Southern textile workers, embracing mills in three states, lifts the lid on a seething cauldron of working class discontent generated by the intensification of the labor process and the multiplied exploitation which has been taking place under the formula of "rationalization." The capitalist dreams of a "strikeless America" are being shattered by the hammer blows of the class struggle in Tennessee and the Carolinas. These strikes are symptoms of the coming wave of struggles which will arise inevitably out of the whole condition of labor in the trustified industries. Besides that, they have a number of features which give them a special significance in themselves. The "New Unionism" will go through its fiery test in these battles and, if the correct tactics are employed, its foundations will be consolidated.

The strikers in the Carolinas are the answer of the cotton mill workers to the "stretch-over" system of speed-up introduced recently under the direction of efficiency experts and which was calculated to increase, and in some cases to double the number of looms operated by a worker for approximately the same pay. The miserable wage standards and long hours imposed on these unorganized workers had already provided the fuel for this fire. The report of the U. S. Department of Commerce, showing the average annual wage of all workers in North Carolina manufacturing plants to be \$774.20—about one half the average wage in the North—tells its own story. The full time weekly wage of women mill workers is \$12.32 in South Carolina and \$14.62 in North Carolina. For men it is \$15.46 in the former and \$17.41 in the latter. A fifty-five hour week is the rule in South Carolina and fifty-six hour week in North Carolina. Such conditions are the soil for a radical development of which these strikes represent only the beginning.

The present strike wave helps to demolish a popular capitalist myth, proclaimed in a million dollars' worth of advertisements—a myth not without influence even in the ranks of the left wing of the labor movement—about the "docility" of the 100 per cent American workers of the South and their immunity from strikes and labor unionism.

Native Americans in Revolt

The workers involved in the strikes for the most part are natives, without previous experience in labor organization, who have been lately recruited from the country-side by the rapid industrialization of the South. A special writer in the New York Times says: "The boast of the manufacturers of the Carolinas is the large supply of both actual and potential laborers of Anglo Saxon stock who are not, and never have been, successfully organized into unions. . . . Coming without warning, the strikers have been a distinct shock." More of these "shocks" are in store.

The native American workers in the industrialized South (and not only in the South) will prove to be valiant fighters in the coming labor battles which will bring with them the establishment of the New Unionism. Indeed, as the movement gains strength and scope and becomes firmly fixed in the conditions of American life they will be the leaders of it. The ability to see and understand this fact, in all its implications, is a *sine qua non* for a cor-

rect approach to the developing new situation by the Communists and left wing. In this period which offers the prospect of the Communists playing an influential part in the American labor movement it is necessary that we take nothing for granted, that we put aside all preconceived prejudices and closely examine and re-examine our tactics at every stage of the struggles.

Communists have appeared in this hitherto "undiscovered country" as the organizers of the strikes—or of some of them—and in some cases have got the jump on the moribund A. F. of L. unions. And this is testimony to the vitality of the new union movement and of the Communists who are its driving force. The strikes are by no means a revolution nor even a conscious political demonstration, but the activity of revolutionaries in them is a perfectly natural phenomena. The complaint of the New Leader: "that a great opportunity has been 'missed' because 'A. F. of L. representatives have not acted promptly' is on the one hand a sour expression of wonderment and regret that Communists do not die when they are expelled, and on the other hand it is a confession that revolutionaries are the only clear and resolute fighters for reforms—for the immediate and pressing needs of the workers.

Tactics of the Communists

Communists are a small part of the labor movement; from a numerical standpoint a very small part. Nevertheless, they can play an influential, and to a certain extent a leading part in many of the strike battles of the proximate future, and in the shaping of new union movement, if they succeed in correlating revolutionary aims and consciousness with the realities of the situation and the workers' actual needs of the moment. It is a question of tactics. Slogans must correspond to the situation. It is worth while to repeat this truism because it is not always remembered, and situations are lost because of slogans and demands which appear too remote, and consequently fail to rally the workers in a given situation. What applies to slogans and demands holds good for all practical activities and conduct in connection with a concrete action or struggle.

These workers who are now entering the path of class struggle—many of them for the first time—will not pass over from political backwardness and passivity, from capitalist-mindedness, to Communism at one bound. Neither will their natural leaders, who spring out of the mass and express the mass, be full-fledged Leninists. Far from it. It is more likely that the typical man of influence will be a church member, a Moose or a consistent voter for the Democratic ticket. It is with such phenomena as this, which will arise in a thousand instances, that the Communists will have to learn how to deal as the slogan of organizing the Unorganized is translated into deeds. It is only by degrees, through patient and systematic work and through further development of the class struggle that these workers and their natural leaders will develop their class consciousness and political understanding and individual exceptions will be found. But we cannot go by them if we are thinking in terms of mass organizations.

Just in proportion as success crowns the work for the new unions, as substantial organizations take shape, so will the question of the united front, of Party relations with non-Party elements, of relations with "progressives", etc., become more insistent. The current theories about the monopolistic control of the Party over these unions will break on these rocks; or else the new unions will break.

Every honest militant will support the strikers and the new unions of the Southern textile workers with all his power. At the same he will watch their development from the standpoint of the questions mentioned above. They are decisive for the future. Upon the answer to them hinges the question whether we are driving ahead toward mass organizations

Philadelphia in Campaign for Weekly

Persistence and determination are the characteristics of the Opposition supporters in the campaign for a Weekly Militant.

Philadelphia and St. Louis have swung sharply into the campaign, Leon Goodman, secretary of the Philadelphia group, writes.

"We had a group meeting in Philadelphia last Saturday and we set our quota in the drive for a Weekly Militant at \$200.00. We have worked out the details to raise that amount. Our comrades have pledged themselves to a definite amount each week. We are planning a benefit together with the local American Negro Labor Congress. The April 1st issue of The Militant is the best ever! Great! . . . Morgy will speak next week before the Liberal League Forum on 'The Youth and the Labor Movement.'"

The rapidly growing St. Louis group through secretary Martin Payer writes: "At our last meeting we pledged \$100.00 in the campaign for the Weekly Militant."

St. Louis has also undertaken a subscription drive for The Militant. A number of subs have already been obtained there.

The drive in New York is taking on impetus and the group has just turned in an additional \$30.25. Subscribers to The Militant and sympathizers are being solicited by the members.

The New Haven group sends in \$13.00 through S. Gendelman, secretary, in opening its campaign to put over a Weekly Militant. Varying amounts are coming in from numerous individual supporters and the groups. All recognize the decisive importance of a Weekly Militant to combat the growing bureaucracy and degeneracy of the official Party apparatus. At Chicago, Detroit, Bethlehem, Youngstown, Los Angeles and many other points supporters are doing their share.

The groups are exerting themselves in the Weekly Militant Drive in an endeavor to make the National Conference of the Opposition to be held in Chicago beginning May 17th, the touchoff for the Weekly Militant. This is an aspiring aim. Let each comrade get energetically into the Campaign. Make individual contributions or loans. Reach the sympathizers and workers who want a genuine expression of revolutionary communism.

The results to date are:
Amount necessary to start
Weekly \$2,000.00
Previously acknowledged \$562.70
Received since last issue 71.75
Tot. contributions to date 634.45
Balance needed 1,365.55

Send Contributions to
THE MILITANT
Box 120, Madison Square Station, N. Y. C.

of the workers or futile, sectarian, paper unions.

Another question of great importance in connection with the new strike wave, under the auspices of different organizations in different sections of the same industry, is that of the program for the unification of the struggles. The Communists must give a clear and correct answer also to this question. It is a subject for a separate article.

The Coming Elections in Great Britain

By Maurice Spector

For the Tory government the recent series of reverses in agricultural no less than in industrial constituencies spell the handwriting on the wall. A premonition of their political fate prompts one of their noted publicists to remark that "the ministerial dullness is like a processional dead-march in anticipation of one's own funeral." Mr. Baldwin still sucks his pipe blandly but the Chinese poet must have had someone like the British Premier in mind, when his own life having been wrecked by intelligence, he prayed for a scion sufficiently dull to qualify for the tranquil career of cabinet minister. It may be doubted if a bushel of the reddest "Zinoviev" letters for the Orloff factory lately raided in Berlin, could steam up the "Great British Electorate" to drown the memories of the last four and a half years of Conservative futility.

On the hustings Baldwin continues to reiterate that "socialism is an economic dance of death" but the large and inescapable fact stands out that there are just a quarter of a million more unemployed on the register today than when the Tories took office with the biggest majority, barring one, in British parliamentary history. Other "achievements" of this regime are the lengthening of the miners' hours, intervention in China, rupture with the Soviet Union, suppression of the General Strike, and enactment of repressive legislation against trade unionism.

The Loyal Oppositions

The signs point to a second Labor government in the form of a more or less veiled "Lib-Lab" coalition, and guided by Ramsey MacDonald's precepts of "continuity". That is to say, his present indictment of the Baldwin Administration for its "inaction and reaction" will fully apply to his own. There will be no Marxian and Bolshevik "despotic inroads into property". The first Labor government recognized Soviet Russia grudgingly, carried out the cruiser program of their Conservative predecessors, bombed the natives of Iraq for taxes, maintained the British Raj in India, avoided anything savoring of nationalization, and helped to put the Dawes Plan into operation.

Since then the British masses have tended more and more to the Left, have gone through the experiences of Red Eriday and the General Strike, but the reformist bureaucracy has succeeded in transforming the Labor Party, structurally and in program, into a conventional social-democratic party, worshipping more and more zealously at the shrine of the Constitution and the Empire. Not only are the Communists excluded by chapter and verse but local labor parties suspected of "red" sympathies can be and are also excluded. Nationalization and the capital levy have been dropped from the docket of "practical politics". Philip Snowden, who may be presumed to know the intentions of his Party, goes so far as to commit himself to the thunderous iconoclasm of a Federal Reserve Banking system! (New York World, March 23, 1929.) Nothing is more certain than that the second MacDonald government will prove as helpless in the face of the stern realities as the parties of Capital. It has been truly observed that you cannot make a revolution with rosewater.

England's Economic Position

The chronic depression for the past six years in the British basic industries, coal, iron, steel, textiles, shipbuilding, is no pre-war cyclical fluctuation of "bad trade". That is why, during this whole period, successive British cabinets have achieved the impressive results of the members of the old German Club who sat around a table over the center of which was suspended an illuminated board bearing the device: "Es mus was geschehen". (Something must be done about it.)

England experienced a profound economic crisis and sharp class struggle following the Napoleonic wars, but that proved a crisis of growth, heralding an era of unexampled industrial expansion in a world where other countries were still in the grip of feudalism like Japan, struggling for national unification

like Germany, or pioneering like the United States. British pre-war prosperity was rooted in primacy and monopoly in the world market, and these advantages have since disappeared. In these circumstances, rationalization can as little avail as free trade or protection; it can only accentuate the dilemma of British capitalism in a world of increased productive power, intensified competition, and a diminishing market, and seriously enhance the danger of a second world war.

The Anglo-American antagonism has replaced the Anglo-German in the fateful role it plays in world politics. "We may as well face the fact," writes the London Economist, "that the United States in the 20th century is likely to be a much more formidable economic competitor than Germany was in the latter part of the 19th century. . . . A refusal on our part to make the possible and necessary adjustment would court political and economic disaster."

On the point of how this adjustment is to be made, the Economist is not explicit but points to the pacific note struck by Hoover in his inaugural address. ("I convoked for this administration a record of having further contributed to the advance of world peace.") Bourgeois pacifists generally hope for the elimination of the competitive causes of war through bigger and better production and sales agreements of international cartels. It was this same Hoover however, who as secretary of commerce formulated American economic policy in these terms: "The establishment of international price-fixing machinery will never be considered by the people of the United States. United States is more pledged to open competition than any other nation in the world." (U. S. Daily, February 31, 1927.) The United States Senate will sign the Kellogg Pact and pass the Cruiser Bill. The British cabinet will endorse the Locarno Agreement and arrange the Anglo-French naval compromise. The Geneva conferences will go up in smoke.

Weakness of Communist Party

In this changed position of British capitalism, the British working class has ceased to be the "bourgeois" working class it was in the description of Engel's letter to Kautsky in 1882. The basis of opportunism and "Liberal-Labor" politics has been profoundly undermined. But, unfortunately, despite the rich instructions of the capitalist offensive, of the great strikes, the general election finds the influences of the reformists strengthened and that of the revolutionaries weakened.

In the municipal elections of last year, the Communists lost even their three seats in Bethnal Green. The British Communist, R. P. Dutt, who is quite free from the taint of "Trotskyism", nevertheless makes this important admission: "At the same time as the leftward advance of the working class is going forward, in 1927, visibly in every direction, the Communist Party is not only stationary but actually going down." (Communist International, March 15, 1928.) At the last convention of the British Communist Party, its membership was actually down to 3,500. It is no pleasure to record this rout of British Communism but we are under no obligations to send Stalin war communiqués from the realm of Peter Pan trumpeting forth the heavy massacre of the enemy and our own trifling losses.

The impotence of the British Communist Party is the punishment history has meted out for the whole opportunist and centrist line of the Comintern since the Fifth Congress. At no point of its analysis has the Opposition led by L. D. Trotsky been vindicated with greater precision than its unflagging criticism of the subordination of the interests of the revolutionary movement to the requirements of the Anglo-Russian Committee (the bloc of the Soviet trade unions with the reformists of the General Council.) This policy was initiated in 1924 when Zinoviev, before his temporary break with Stalin, developed the idea that the avenue to the proletarian dictatorship in England might lie through the Purcells, Hickses et al.,

and not necessarily through the Communist Party, a revisionist conception against which Trotsky protested in his Lessons of October (1924).

It was continued under Bucharin who compared the proposal to withdraw from the Anglo-Russian Committee after the betrayal of the General Strike with the enormity of WITHDRAWING FROM THE SOVIETS IN 1917! Stalin on July 1926 before the Plenum of the Russian Central Committee defined the tasks of the Anglo-Russian Committee: "to organize a broad working class movement against new imperialist wars, particularly against intervention in our country". To this the Opposition replied: "The more acute the international position grows, to that extent the Anglo-Russian Committee will become an instrument of British and international imperialism."

The Anglo-Russian Committee

The Anglo-Russian Committee became the Holy of Holies, which it was sacrilege to attack for inaction. The British Party leadership wanted to renew the agitation for a revival of the Anglo-Russian Committee after it had already become a carcass. In a "confidential" communication to the President of the E. C. C. I. July 1926) the British C. E. C. PROTESTED AGAINST THE CHARACTERIZATION OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL AS "LACKEYS OF CAPITALISM". In the article of Dutt already referred to, he diplomatically reveals that "there is no doubt that there was some misunderstanding by Communists of the united front as a direct personal supporting and building up of the prestige of these treacherous pseudo-Left leaders, and their exposure only after the "event". The Bells, Murphys and Gallachers had drunk deeply at the well of the Stalin faction.

DID NOT TOMSKY PROPOSE AT THE 14th CONGRESS OF THE RUSSIAN PARTY THAT THE SOVIET TRADE UNIONS SHOULD ENTER THE AMSTERDAM INTERNATIONAL? Does the membership of the Comintern know of Tomsky's famous telegram from Paris, May 12, to the Russian Polit-Bureau proposing that "the Communist Party of Great Britain should submit to the decision of the General Council" to break off the strike which in his view was to be considered as a "partial MORAL VICTORY OF THE PROLETARIAT"? The so-called "new line" of the British Communists (independent political action and candidates) is too far at the tail end of events again to influence this election.

Trotsky on England

Towards the development of the British revolution, we of the Communist Opposition look forward with supreme confidence. "The entire world situation and role of the British proletariat in production and in society assure it of the victory provided its leadership be truly and resolutely revolutionary. . . . The Communist Party will prepare itself for the function of leadership only by a merciless criticism of the entire dominating staff of the English labor movement, only by a constant unmasking of the conservative, anti-proletarian, imperialist functionaries in all the fields of social life. . . . It would be a monstrous illusion that these 'left' elements of the Old School are capable of heading the revolutionary movement of the English proletariat in its struggle for power." These words were written by comrade Trotsky in his Whither England, in the heyday of the Anglo-Russian Committee and before the General Strike, and they are a golden text for working class strategy today. The second Labor government or Liberal-Labor coalition will collapse miserably under the weight of the contradictions of British imperialism, maturing still further the conditions for a mass Communist Party, capable of leading towards a revolutionary socialist workers' dictatorship.

The Lost Leader! The Strange Case of the Disappearance of John Pepper In Our Next Issue

THE MILITANT

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