

May Day - - and After

May Day.

The militant working class of the entire world down tools today to demonstrate its solidarity. It marches before the capitalists—its class enemy—with a challenge to the rule of the masters. The workers' flag which reddens the columns of our troops is the symbol of the coming victory of the people.

May Day is a day of celebration of this coming victory. It is also a day of preparation for it. To prepare for its historic victory, the working class, and especially its most advanced section, must review its struggles of the past period. It must take a reckoning of its present condition. It must gird itself, and armed with greater confidence and the lessons of its experiences, proceed with increased consciousness to the battles of the future.

The period of new struggles that has already begun in Europe for the working class already includes the United States. Despite the tremendous backwardness of American labor, the past two years have witnessed a number of bitterly and heroically fought strikes in which the American workers have demonstrated that they have a spirit of militancy, of self-sacrifice and endurance—as in the miners' strike, in the textile mills and in the clothing shops of New York—that is seldom equalled. The American workers are worthy brothers-in-arms of their more revolutionary European comrades.

But the American workers as a whole, because of their privileged position and other historical causes, still remain relatively backward, are still largely unorganized and lacking in solidarity and unity, still suffer under the stifling control of the labor agents of capitalism, still grope blindly in the darkness of capitalist illusions. Should such a situation continue, it can only mean greater and heavier defeats and burdens for the working class in the fights they will conduct against the capitalist class in the next period.

American Imperialism

The problems of the American workers are enormous. Nowhere and at no time has the proletariat ever been confronted by such a formidable enemy as American labor has in the master class of this country. United States imperialism today is master in its own home and has proceeded to master the rest of the world. Millions of workers and poor farmers in every part of the world feel the heavy weight of its iron fist. In China as in New York, in Mexico as in Pittsburgh, in Africa as in Alabama, in Europe as in Illinois, in South America as in Gary, millions of toilers pay tribute to the bursting treasure stores of the Morgans, the Rockefellers, the Schwabs, the Mellons and the rest of the American money kings. You will find the American bayonet or the dollar in the hand of reaction in almost every country where it is in power. Wherever the rule of American imperialism has not yet triumphed, you will find it preparing to establish its mastery by military and financial force.

Its world domination, however, cannot be established or maintained without having a servile, quiet, "satisfied" working class at home. But the American workers are being steadily driven to struggle. They are awakening to the danger of new imperialist war that

hangs like a sword over their heads. They are beginning to resist the wage cuts and speed-up and union-smashing work of the bosses. They are being aroused at the government which is the official agent of the capitalist class. A new mood of struggle is developing, and one of the best signs of it is the uprising of the backward, oppressed textile slaves of the South.

The American Labor Leaders

The main instrument of the capitalists in strangling this spirit resistance in the ranks of the working class are the present labor "leaders". Instead of organizing the workers for struggle, for the defense and improvement of their standard of living, instead of strengthening their ranks and pointing their weapons towards the real enemy—the bosses and their government—the Greens, the Wolls, the Lewises, the Freys, the Schlesingers and the Hillmans divide the ranks of the workers. They deliberately limit the strength of the organized workers by refusing to organize the unorganized. They sap the fighting force of the unions by their established policy of expelling every militant fighter who opens his mouth. They drug the workers to sleep with treacherous words and deeds of "peace" with the bosses when there is not and cannot be peace. They enter into struggles under the pressure of the workers only to betray them to the capitalist class for whom they are working in reality. They reject the policy of class struggle and replace it with the policy of surrender to the capitalists. They are the agents of the enemy in our ranks and they must be driven out. They are the bulwarks of capitalism and they must be broken. Without a stubborn, daily struggle against these traitors the American workers cannot move forward.

The Fight for a Class Movement

The task that stands out above all others for American labor today is the creation and strengthening of a class movement of the workers on the economic field and the political field. Towards this end the trade unions must become instruments for struggle, for obtaining better conditions from the bosses instead of being instruments to increase production and add to the profits of the bosses. They must become training schools for the workers' cause and not schools for capitalist propaganda taught by the reactionary labor leaders.

The workers must strengthen their unions by organizing the unorganized millions especially the Negro workers, for without them a successful struggle against trustified American capitalism is impossible. The workers must be mobilized as one army to fight against the use of injunctions against unions and strikes. The workers must be mobilized as one army to fight for the seven-hour day. The workers must be mobilized as one army in solidified industrial unions to fight for the right to strike, the right to picket. The right of free speech and free assemblage. Such elementary conditions which are not yet enjoyed by American workers, like social insurance, maintenance of the millions of unemployed, care of women workers and of child labor, must be made an immediate aim on the order of the day.

For Unity and Solidarity

To achieve these and many other aims the workers of America must have solidarity and unity. The prejudices of the white workers against the Negroes, cunningly injected into our ranks by the capitalists, must be burned out and our fight conducted side by side. The cleavage that divides the organized from the unorganized workers must be narrowed down until it disappears by drawing ALL workers into trades unions. The expelled militants in the unions—Communists and left wing—must be immediately brought back, for they are the best fighters in the labor movement.

It is the agents of the capitalists—from Green to Schlesinger, from Woll to Hillquit—who disrupt the labor movement. It is they who thrive on expulsions and splits that weak-

en the workers. Our answer must be to maintain the banner of UNITY of all the workers against the capitalists and their servants in the labor movement. The slogan of unity in the labor movement is a powerful slogan particularly in times of struggle. It represents the interests and the aspirations of the oppressed workers. It must be put forth not only by the left wing which must be built and strengthened in the A. F. of L. unions. It must also be inscribed on the banner of the new unions, the National Miners Union, the Needle Trades Union, the National Textile Workers Union. They must seize every opportunity to demand the unity of their ranks with the RANKS of the workers who remain in the old A. F. of L. unions. They must be foremost in demanding that the separate, isolated, weak struggles be combined. This has not yet been done, although we know that the labor misleaders will reject this demand as enthusiastically as the rank and file will welcome it.

These are important tasks for the labor movement. They must be persistently advanced especially by the Communists, the revolutionary and most conscious section of the working class. The Communists have a tremendous role to play in the coming period of struggle. But the pre-condition for this role is the unification of the entire Communist movement on a Leninist basis. Such a unification is impossible in this country without the re-establishment of the unity of the Leninist Party in the Soviet Union, which is the fountain head of the world revolutionary movement today.

The Tasks of the Communists

The twelfth May Day demonstration after the victory of Bolshevism in Russia in 1917, finds Trotsky, the living leader of world Bolshevism exiled in Turkey, a prisoner of Stalin and Turkish fascism, surrounded by thousands of Russian White Guards who hate him above all others as the symbol of the Revolution. It finds the best leaders of Lenin's Party exiled or imprisoned in the most desolate parts of Siberia and Central Asia. These are signs of the times. The course of the official leadership of the Communist International for the past few years has been a steady departure from the fundamental teachings of Lenin, and a murderous campaign against those who stubbornly propagated these teachings in the Party.

The Communist movement will be totally incapable of achieving its practical aims, of setting the proletariat in motion along the revolutionary path, unless it rejects the revisionist theories now prevalent in the Comintern. Thus were the Communist Parties built and strengthened in the post-war years and the first period of the Russian Revolution. Today the Communists must reject as fatal to the movement the main theories developed in the last few years, developed jointly by the vacillating Center (Stalin) and the Thermidorian Right wing (Bucharin): 1. The anti-Bolshevik theory of "socialism in one country"; 2. The catastrophic policy practised in the Anglo-Russian Committee and the British General Strike; 3. The Menshevik betrayal of the Chinese proletariat and peasantry by the policy of Stalin-Bucharin-and-Co.; 4. The course toward capitulation to capitalism in Russia today, thinly disguised by the Centrist zig-zag policy, which conceals the open Right danger of Bucharin-Tomsky-Rykov, which erects a "Left" blind in order the better to move towards the Right.

A Leninist line without the leadership of the Leninists who re imprisoned, exiled and persecuted is a hypocritical farce. The entire Communist movement must renew the demand for the return of the expelled Opposition to their rightful leadership of the Comintern and the Russian Party. The increasing difficulties of the Soviet Union and the dangerous splitting-up course in the Communist Parties make this return a burning need of the moment. The huge tasks before us make this return mandatory.

Let this May Day open up a new period of struggles and victories. Onward to the final class battle for the world Soviet!

Our Conference and the Trade Unions

By James P. Cannon

On May 17th the most active militants of the Communist Opposition from all parts of the country will meet in National Conference in Chicago, the proletarian center of the real America rich in glorious traditions of working class struggle and aspiration. Many a noble enterprise of the labor vanguard had its inception there; many a stirring battle, many a defeat and many a brave start again. It is not unlikely that our modest conference will find a place of honor among them in the history of the American revolutionary movement. This will surely be the case if our conference approximates the accomplishment of the tasks which crowd upon it, if it does not shrink before their magnitude and gives a clear answer to the questions now on the agenda of the American revolutionary movement. We shall endeavor to do this to the best of our ability.

The Importance of our Conference

The importance of our gathering for the future of the Opposition is fully understood, we believe, by all the comrades who have stood with us in the struggle up till now. And many who have not yet identified themselves directly with us wait the result of our deliberations with the greatest interest. There is wisdom in collective counsel. The fact that we are finally forcing a way, despite our great poverty, to bring our foremost comrades in the various districts together for the comparison of experiences, the exchange of views and the collective settlement of our problems is testimony to the vitality of our movement. We must make the most of the opportunity which has not been given to us, but which we have wrested from adversity.

In the first place we ought to give a thought to the general character of the conference. We meet to face things as they are and to deal with them soberly and confidently. Exaggeration, bombast, false claims and self-deception will be out of place; it will be for us now to put all the questions concretely and quietly discuss the ways and means of answering them. There should be nothing to prevent our meeting having a business-like character from start to finish. The sterile factionalism and intrigue which corrodes the party and renders its conventions futile should not trouble us at all. We have a common principle line. That is the foundation, and the only foundation, for united and harmonious collective work. Differences of opinion on secondary questions which may exist can be discussed honestly and openly. Those who are united on fundamental lines do not fear discussion.

The conference can bring fruitful results for the movement only on the condition that we do not deceive ourselves as to the state of affairs. What we think of the position of the labor and revolutionary movement in America and its perspectives has been clearly stated in the draft of our platform. The opinions we have written there about the class immaturity of the workers' movement in America and the elementary nature of the fundamental tasks of the revolutionary elements are not new; they arise inexorably from the facts of the situation.

The evils we fight against within the communist movement are not a new phenomenon and they will not be done away with in a day. Our struggle, as a detachment of the International Leninist Opposition, is a revolt against revisionist and bureaucratic corruption which has been seeping into the Comintern since Lenin left its leadership six years ago. During that time, gradually and almost imperceptibly, great changes have been brought about in Lenin's International—and all in his name. This is true of the main ideas, of the course and of the leadership. All this is buttressed by a bureaucratized apparatus and a monopoly of the material resources and press which has attracted a veritable horde of parasites and mercenaries into its service, thrusting out the tried and reliable revolutionary fighters.

It would be foolish to think that these monstrous perversions, which have been accumulating over a period of six years, could be changed in a day. We had no such illusions and have none now. To fight for the fundamental line of Marx and Lenin within the communist

ranks today means to swim against the stream. Only those who are able to do this can remain with us. We never promised a quick victory and do not promise it now. We hold out only the prospect of a long, stubborn struggle for principle against difficulties, persecution and slander. It is quite true that the revisionist-bureaucratic regime has profound and irreconcilable internal contradictions and is bound to collapse under the impact of the class struggle which cannot be regulated by apparatus manipulation. But an indispensable factor for the hastening of this collapse, and for saving the revolutionary movement from collapse with it, is the firm consolidation of the Opposition Communists for a drawn-out struggle. It will be the task of the National conference to harden our forces for a siege.

The Trade Union Question

It is becoming clearer every day that plain speech is necessary on the trade union questions. Without a sound policy in this sphere it is absolutely impossible to build the Communist Party as the guiding influence among the masses. And we have to say openly that our differences with the Party regarding trade union tactics are increasing. This becomes all the more serious in view of the forthcoming convention of the Trade Union Educational League, where, from all indications, the false line of the Party is to be reinforced by organization forms which will inevitably develop further implications along the wrong track.

The Party is wrong in bringing out a program for a new trade union movement all along the line. It is wrong in undertaking to monopolize the control of the new unions in a narrow Party sense. It is wrong in exercising Party leadership mechanically and stifling democracy and self-initiative in the new unions. And it is wrong in its attitude toward the new progressive movement.

The total result of these and similar associated errors will be a program and practice of organizing Communist sects rather than mass organizations. Every new experience makes this clearer. Now the consequences of these errors are immeasurable. They spell isolation for the Party and the crippling of the new union movement. The policies which are now being enunciated in preparation for the national conference of the T.U.E.L. appear to us to have no relation to reality. They sound in many respects like feeble echoes of old S. L. P. and I. W. W. propaganda which substituted wishes for facts. Moreover the present policy bears no relation whatever to the settled practice of the Party over a period of years, since the 1921 Convention, and which was in the main correct. And the Party leaders do not even bother to explain the reasons for this complete reversal. It is like a new revelation which has to be taken for granted. A workers' political movement can be destroyed, but never built by such irresponsible methods and leadership.

Consider, for example, the attitude toward the Progressives. "We will have nothing to do with them," say the modern phrase-mongers who see only persons and have no Marxian understanding of movements. Compare this with what Lovestone wrote in *The Communist* last May, page 277:

"The progressives are of vital importance in the development of a left wing movement of a mass character. They serve under certain conditions as one of the levers for the development of a clear-cut, broad, left-wing movement."

All of today's pronouncements say the exact opposite, without the slightest explanation of the reasons for the complete change of view and without attempting to show wherein last year's estimate of the role of the progressives was wrong. This is playing with leadership in the most irresponsible manner.

The statement quoted above, which in our opinion is a correct one, was formulated in a guarded way so as to appear more "left" than the actual opinions of the writer. To learn that it is only necessary to recall the practices of united front, without criticism, under the hegemony of the progressives in so many

cases. Personal relations at the top instead of the utilization of relations with progressive leaders for the promotion of a common movement of the workers below. But these distortions should not lead us to react to the present policy of rejecting all relations with the new progressive movement. To do so is to turn aside from one of the most important avenues for the development of the class movement of the workers and the building of the Communist influence and organization within it.

Our Conference and the Progressives

Our conference should take a firm and definite stand on this question. In our opinion the conference of the Opposition Communists should support the idea of entering every movement of a progressive character in the trade unions; they should work loyally to advance it; they should for combinations with all elements willing to cooperate with us in the fight for a concrete program in the interests of the workers and their economic organizations. At the same time, and in order to do this effectively, they should fight and expose the fakers in the movement, criticise all reformist tendencies and build the independent Communist organization and influence. This policy applies with equal force in the work of organizing new unions and in the work inside the old unions of the American Federation of Labor and the Independent unions of a similar character.

We must not for a moment cease our efforts to convince the Party of the necessity for this line, for the Party is a factor of the greatest dynamic importance and a false policy on its part will have the gravest consequences in the whole militant workers' movement for which such unbounded possibilities are now unfolding. But in any case our activity cannot be confined to mere criticism. Hand in hand with it must go the development of a systematic activity of the Opposition Communists in the trade union movement along the lines of our own policy. Practical demonstrations of its correctness will exert a powerful influence on the Party ranks and, simultaneously, will be the means of consolidating a revolutionary nucleus within the new progressive movements which will become the center and rallying point for all the militants in the future. The more firmly we insist on this policy and the more energetically we apply it in practice the less will be the harm done by the present phrase hysteria.

Proceeding along this line, facing all obstacles and fearing none of them, tackling all the concrete questions in a serious and workmanlike manner and giving an answer to them, our Conference will render services of historic value to the American working class movement and will perform a duty to the International.

OUR MAY DAY MEETINGS

A number of mass meetings were held in various cities on International May Day by the Communist Opposition, in some cities together with other labor and revolutionary groups. As this issue goes to press we have not yet received complete details. Below we give brief resumes of the meetings.

Comrades Arne Swaback, leader of the Chicago Opposition Communists, spoke at the May Day meeting of the Karl Marx Scandinavian Workers Club. The same organization had been prevented from hearing comrade Swaback on the "Truth about Trotsky" a few weeks ago by the gangster-splitting tactics of the Stalinists.

In Philadelphia the May Day meeting was held under the joint auspices of the Opposition Group, the Philadelphia Negro Labor Alliance and the Workers Defense Committee, with comrades K. M. Whitten, Leo Goodman for the youth, and A. Watreno for the Negro workers as the speakers.

In Minneapolis the May Day meeting was held under the joint auspices of the Minneapolis Lenin-Trotsky League (Opposition), the Scandinavian Workers Club and the Workers Club of Minneapolis with speakers in English and Swedish.

In Cleveland, the Militant Club (Opposition), the Industrial Workers of the World, and the American Workers Educational Association combined to hold a May Day meeting with speakers in various languages. The Lithuanian "Mirtos" Choir participated.

In St. Louis, the Communist Opposition and the Militant Workers Club held a May Day meeting, after the Stalinists had prevented a united front May Day meeting of all working class organizations.

In New York City, the May Day meeting could not be held because of the last-minute cancellation of the hall by the management. The reason given was the fear that a riot would occur due to the tactics of the Stalinists.

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