

CLEVELAND and Unorganized Labor

By James Young

(Note: The following observations on the Cleveland conference of the T. U. E. L. were written by one of the delegates who is at the same time one of the leading comrades in the Party. He uses the pseudonym of Young for obvious reasons.—Ed.)

The mobilization and organization of the unorganized, unskilled and semi-skilled workers in the basic industries of the United States is of major importance for the class struggle. The tactics to be employed in this task have again brought confusion in the revolutionary and labor movement. The present position of American imperialism, with its upward curve, with its unsolvable contradictions, and a radicalization process among the workers, compel us to clarify the situation.

In the revolutionary ranks, the Communist forces, the Right wing elements throughout the world and especially in the more important sections of the Comintern, have openly taken up arms for their opportunist line. In America, the Lovestone-Gitlow forces have joined hands with their brothers in Germany, Russia and France. The dislodging of this Right element in the world Party has put adrift the Centrist forces of Stalin, which mechanically adopt a "Left" position. But with their non-Marxist, non-Leninist position on socialism in one country, on the colonial revolutions, etc., the Centrists lead directly isolation and to the mechanical execution of our tasks.

Today, the three wings in the American Party, the Lovestone-Gitlow Right, the Foster-Bedacht-Stachel Center, and the supporters of the Communist Opposition, face the problem of organizing the unorganized, with the official Party press performing its customary service of beclouding the issue.

The question, "Shall we build new unions?" is not settled by a purely negative or positive answer. Over a year ago the question was on the agenda of the Party and the Opposition fought for a new line and for the new unions, as against the conservatism and rigidity of the present Rights and a good part of the Centrists who opposed the new line and fought the R.I.L.U. on this point. Foster was included in this list. However, when they were forced to concede to the formal position, they did so mechanically and established a few paper organizations.

The struggle for the unionization of the unorganized will not be successful until the militants adopt the correct tactic for combining their forces in the old unions with the work of establishing new unions in the basic industries, not as two separate tasks but as an interconnected whole. Our experiences thus far show that even from the "abstracted" point of view the new unions and their struggles, supplementary work in the old unions would have put many spokes in the strike-breaking work of the reactionary leaders and won the ranks to our side.

The New York Times quotes Muste in his Labor Day speech as gleeful that the Communists are building their own unions and their own center which will enable Muste and his kind to proceed with their mission without being labelled as or bothered by Communists. Muste is opposed to building new unions, but this does not at all mean that anyone who wants a united front is thereby opposed to new unions. Thus, the Lovestone forces opposed the building of new unions when they controlled the Party and the present Opposition fought for the establishment of new unions.

The R.I.L.U. letter to the Cleveland conference said: Muste is opposed to the new unions, and Lovestone and Cannon are of the same group of opportunists. Tactical questions and differing positions cannot be dismissed so easily. One must know the history of the Trotsky and Lovestone groups to see why their various tactics are formulated. The Communist League is for organizing the unorganized into new unions wherever necessary and its supporters were the first to fight for this line. The problem lies in the relation of the new unions to the forces we can utilize in the old unions.

The difference between the official Party and the Communist League is not a difference on new unions versus no new unions, but a difference on the estimation of the forces within the old and the new and their mutual relation. The mechanical "Left" position of the Party already confronts us with two dangers: first, the establishment of paper organizations in every industry, and secondly, the withdrawal of revolutionary forces at the wrong time from reactionary unions, thereby making the fakers a present of the masses.

The Stalinists are great strategists; In a revolutionary period in England, during and after the General Strike, after the "Lefts" in the General Council had outlived their usefulness, the Stalin forces fought for the continuation of the united front with the betrayers. A united front with Purcell and Co.—reserving our own independence and right of criticism—was essential up to a certain stage, but carried beyond this point, suicidal.

In America—when the drift to the Left, when the radicalization process is only on its first lap (it is not yet a revolutionary period despite the monstrous exaggerations of the Party)—the policy of the Stalinists is to carry out a crazy caricature of what they refused to accept in England when Trotsky called for the break with the reformists. In England we had a period of tense and pregnant class struggle, a stage of revolutionary upheaval; in this country we have yet to approach that period. In England, the "Lefts" showed the workers their true colors. In America the progressives have yet to be exposed. As the period of struggles approaches with increased speed, the progressives will rally greater masses, because editorial

denunciation and criticism from the outside, as the Party press is doing now, is not sufficient. Activity from within to separate the chaff from the wheat in the progressive movement through action is necessary.

Stalin and Lovovsky claim to continue Lenin's policy on trade union work, and Foster says: Intensify our work in the A. F. of L. To say this and at the same time to reject the united front, leads to the defeat of one's policy, to isolation, to giving the fakers free rein in the unions. Deeds, not words, are required against Green and his loyal opposition.

These progressives have "stolen our thunder." With our old program they will be able to get many honest and sincere workers. The way to prove to the workers that these reformists cannot lead them is to put them in a position where they will be faced with the execution of their own words. United front action with the workers will prove that only the Communists and their sympathizers are ready and able to carry out a militant program.

Our emphasis be on the organizing of the unorganized in the basic industries, but at the same time we must have a policy that will enable us to intensify our work in the old unions in reality. This does not mean a verbal barrage, but actual work within the old unions to expose the Greens and the rest of the fakers and win large sections of the workers for the class struggle.

The proletarian sentiment at the Cleveland Convention was good, but not the direct representation, which was a blow to the exaggerations fed us for months. Worse than that was the fact that the discussion on the vital tactical questions indicated above was completely lacking. It has to be conducted now.

A Lovestone Paper Coming

As we go to press we are reliably informed that the Lovestone faction has finally made arrangements for the immediate publication of a sixteen page official monthly magazine. After many weeks of circulating secret mimeographer sheets, the Right wing has made its decision to issue an open organ. The Lovestoneites, who expelled us from the Party when we demanded a discussion of the vital issues in the Communist movement, will now be compelled to face these issues openly and reveal their viewpoint. We proposed that the discussion imperatively needed by the revolutionary movement, and violently prevented by the Stalinists in a bloc with the Thermidorian Right wing, should be held inside the Party. Now it will be held in spite of them in the open—a crushing blow to the blind, frightened bureaucrats who detest and fear all criticism and discussion, and thought to eliminate it with their pitiful mechanical methods. A three-sided discussion of the enormous errors of the Party regime for the past six years, through the WEEKLY MILITANT of the Communist Opposition, the daily paper of the Centrists, and the monthly of the Right wing, will end in a vitally needed clarification. We are confident of the ultimate victory of the Opposition in this discussion.

"Burglary Bolshevism"

To those faith-filled souls who thought that the outcries of the new Party leadership against the burglaries committed by Lovestone against Party offices, indicated any change of heart, or remorse at having burglarized our offices and homes, we recommend the following excerpt from an article entitled "Lovestone, my Former Leader" by William Abrams, in the *Freiheit* of September 1, 1929: "And it is to you, former comrades—again, not to those who ran after a Lore, a Salutsky and other pestilences—I come with the question: Don't you think that the same tactic that is applied against Cannon is criminal when applied to the Communist Party? Don't you think that breaking into the offices of the Central Committee and of Section One, the taking away of documents and lists from there, is an act that must be condemned?" This is the first open and quite cynical admission that the Party second-story men broke into the home of comrade Cannon and stole documents and funds of the Opposition. Worse than that, Abrams not only comes forward here to justify such burglaries, but also by some perverted quirk of the mind and of logic, to condemn just such burglaries when Lovestone commits them against the Party office.

Tragi-comic as it sounds, these are nevertheless the people who claim that they will purify the Communist movement of all petty-bourgeois corruption and Tammany Hall methods! We would like to recommend to the business management of the *Freiheit*, as one of the means of the financial improvement of the paper's condition, to take Abrams and his like bodily to the nearest butcher and sell them while the market is good for such commodities. The Abramses are worth their weight in tripe.

AT LAST! News of Bucharin. . .

The *Daily Worker* (September 13, 1929) has finally received permission from Stalin to publish the first official news of the removal of Bucharin from all his posts, in the form of a resolution of the 10th Plenum of the E.C.C.I. So far as the readers of the *Daily Worker* are concerned, this is the first "news" they have had on the matter. The *Militant*, however, printed the detailed information of the famous "Bucharin case" months ago, including a verbatim report of his negotiations with the capitulator Kamenev, the report of Bucharin's trial before the Control Commission, the secret resolution of Stalin's Political Bureau of the Russian Party to remove Bucharin (passed long ago), and the news of his actual removal. Moreover, months before even this was published, we printed articles by comrade Trotsky in which he exposed the program of the Right wing (Bucharin, Rykov, Tomsky), and foretold the course of the struggle between it and the Stalinist Center. And although

THE 5-YEAR PLAN How Stalin Builds Socialism

One of the most radically false steps yet taken by the Stalin-controlled Political Bureau of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union has just been announced in a decision of its Central Committee. It deprives the Russian factory workers of one of the greatest achievements of the Bolshevik revolution: the rights of the worker in the shops and his control of their management. The American correspondents inspired (if not paid) by Stalin, like Walter Duranty of the *New York Times* and Boris Smolar of the *New York World*, sent the first news of the decision and reported it with proper glee. Smolar cables from Moscow:

"The actual boss in Soviet factories, henceforth, will be the director of each factory, and not, as has been the case, the 'triangle', consisting of a representative each of the Party, the labor union and the directorate. This became known today when the Central Committee of the Communist Party issued a long statement to workers explaining that such clipping of the rights of workers in factories was necessary to stimulate the initiative of factory administrators and to help the five-year industrialization plan. This revolutionary change had to be made because representatives of the Party and the labor unions constantly interfered with the management. Today's instructions therefore state clearly that no Party representative, labor union or other social organization has the right to change the orders of a director." (Our emphasis.)

The *Daily Worker* carefully refrains from mentioning this decision. But the *Freiheit*, which knows that Duranty's cables from Moscow are written in the Kremlin, rewrites his dispatch unblushingly as follows: "For this purpose (industrialization) all Soviet Union Communists must help to establish order and discipline in the factory. Members of the Communist Party, union representatives and shop committees are instructed not to interfere in questions of management." (September 9, 1929, Our emphasis.)

Exactly two years ago today (September 9, 1927) Stalin, in replying to one of the questions of a member of the first American trade union delegation to Russia, said proudly:

"It must be observed that the overwhelming majority of the factory and works managers in Russia are workmen, appointed by the Supreme Economic Council in agreement with the trade unions, and that not a single factory manager can remain at his post contrary to the will of the workers or the particular trade union. It must be observed also that in every factory and workshop there is a factory council, elected by the workers, which controls the activities of the management of the particular enterprise. Finally, it must be observed that in every industrial enterprise regular production conferences of workers are held in which all the workers employed in the given enterprise take part and at which the work of the manager of the enterprise is discussed and criticized; the plan of work in the factory administration is discussed, errors and defects are noted and rectified through the trade unions, through the Party and through the organs of the Soviet administration." (Report of Interview, page 36.)

The latest decision of the Party Central Committee abolishes every single one of these advantages, privileges and rights of the workers in the factory! Factory managers can remain at their posts now even if contrary to the will of the workers or the trade union. The factory council cannot control the activities of its management. Errors and defects in management can no longer be rectified through the trade unions and Party, since there are told not to "interfere", to keep hands off. The very instruction to the Communist Party, the trade unions and the shop committees "not to interfere"—who has the right to "interfere" if not these bodies?—is the acme of bureaucratic distortion of the conquests of the revolution.

Lenin did not oppose the "subjecting the will of thousands to the will of one" in industry. Nor do we. But he emphasized that "the more firmly we now have to advocate a merciless and firm rule and dictatorship of individuals for definite processes of work during certain periods of purely executive functions, the more diverse should be the forms and means of mass control in order to paralyze every possibility of distorting the Soviet rule, in order repeatedly and tirelessly to remove the wild grass of bureaucratism." (Soviets at Work, page 42. Our emphasis). And this was written at the very beginning of the revolution, in 1918, with chaos and counter-revolution in the land. By his new decision, Stalin has removed a number of these "forms and means of mass control" that prevent the growth of bureaucratism.

Only two years ago, the Platform of the Russian Opposition pointed out, in its section on the position of the working class and the trade unions, that under the Stalin-Bucharin regime, the management in the factories strives ever more to establish its unlimited power, to hire and fire without control by the workers. Now this striving has become an established, a legally established fact. The new decision is characteristic of the so-called Five Year Industrialization Plan: it is an industrialization carried out at the gradual expense of workers' rights and workers' interests. It is Stalin's method of "building socialism in one country alone."

even the yellow socialist and the capitalist press published the news weeks and months ago, the *Daily Worker* still retained its gag. In this, as in all else, the Party members are always confronted with accomplished fact. When we tell the truth in time we are "slandering" the International. When the *Daily Worker* tells its half-truths long after the fact, it is Bolshevik self-criticism.