

Stalinists Raid the Co-ops

THE PARTY WINS ANOTHER «VICTORY» IN SUPERIOR

By Vincent R. Dunne

The Communist Party in the Minneapolis-Superior district has just committed the crowning blunder of the long series since the expulsion of the Opposition. Not that it is a district matter alone; far from it. It is merely the scene, because of the location of the cooperative movement in Superior and it makes Karl Reeve, Party district organizer, the official splitter of the movement and places heavy responsibilities upon the comrades of the Communist League here.

As is already known, the Party, because of the Third Period, must secure a stranglehold upon all the auxiliary organizations. The bell has been sounded now for the cooperatives. The Party has therefore mobilized its most reckless crusaders and marched into the North country.

The Hi-Jackers at Work

The professional disrupters and faction agents, Minor and Stachel, were sent together with a host of others to demand that the Cooperative Central Exchange not only donate \$3,000.00 for the T. U. U. L. convention and \$5,000.00 for other Party work, but in addition that a yearly assessment be levied by the Party upon the Exchange to the amount of one percent of the gross sales, which would amount to about \$17,000.00 this year. Also, that all the employees of the Exchange and its member stores should be Party functionaries, that is, the salesmen, truck drivers, clerks, etc., must devote the major part of their time to the organizing of the iron miners and Party units, and in spare time, build the cooperatives.

The Party hi-jackers demanded as a first step that George Halonen ("as the outstanding Right winger") be removed from his post as Educational Director of the Exchange. This suggestion was not well received by the Executive Board. In fact, the Board—of 13, I believe—voted unanimously against it although there are seven Party members on this body. The Board issued a statement for publication in *Tyomies*, the official organ of the Exchange. At that time the Party had somewhat a better (or worse?) crew in charge of the paper who not only refused to publish the statement but came out with a long and vicious statement against the Board in general and Halonen and Ronn in particular.

As its next move, the Executive called seven sub-district meetings of the cooperatives which were, of course, attended by hundreds of members, at which their statement was read, discussed and indorsed overwhelmingly.

Reckless Party Adventure

One might think that these developments would give the Party pause. Not at all. It seems that they were overjoyed. Had not these cooperative comrades proved that they were agents of the capitalists? Of course. Then more pressure, still more pressure! The cooperatives must be saved or destroyed! Reeve, Pobersky, Bernick, Puro, Heikkinen and a dozen more small fry, together with an un-named representative from the Party center, and TWO representatives of the Comintern, were wheeled into position. The conferences and meetings which had been going on almost without number were pushed on to new and higher levels—the situation growing more tense and the Party steadily losing ground.

The Executive Board had in the meantime prepared the *Pyramid Bulder*, the monthly organ of the Central Exchange, containing the statement of the Board. The P. B., however, is printed in the *Tyomies* plant. Now it seems that the Stalin men had not thought of this until it was already being run. I am sure that the natural and orderly process of publication were somewhat hurried by the workers in the plant who are to a man in sympathy with the Executive Board. At any rate, about 3 out of the 5 thousand copies were carried away by individuals in private cars while the Stalin boys were on the lookout for the Executive's truck.

When they finally came to and discovered what was going on, Reeve, with a group of Y. C. L. members and a few others, rushed the plant and succeeded in burning some of the remaining copies. A free-for-all started in which Reeve and the others were driven up the street with heavy losses.

Result: Superior is an armed camp. Guards of the Party are posted in the *Tyomies* and the Hall. The other comrades have

complete control of the Cooperative Central Exchange which is also under armed guard. The Party has lost the control and sympathy of the cooperatives, with their 20,000 members. The control of the *Tyomies* is at best a doubtful one.

The situation is extremely tense and unless the proper steps are taken there can be grievous consequences for the whole labor and revolutionary movement in this section of the country at least. Most of the workers have broken away from the Party essentially because of its wild and devil-may-care policy of arbitrary, mechanical control—or destruction. But the

The Thieves Fall Out in the Miners Union

The destructive fight now ravaging the United Mine Workers Union in the Illinois district between the John L. Lewis international administration and the Harry Fishwick district administration is proving to the hilt all the charges made by the Left wing and progressive forces during the years of struggle against these corrupt officials. One more serious blow is now being administered to the badly shattered remnants of this union, thus indicating a once glorious organization coming to an inglorious end. Now the question of building anew upon the ruins of the old becomes the real burning one.

What this fight really is about is rather difficult to ascertain. There certainly are no principles involved. But the Illinois section still has a dues paying membership bringing in a revenue for which both groups of per-capita absorbers are willing to go to bat. Both administrations have already mutually removed one another expecting the miners to pay the bills out of their starvation wages. Each administration has its paid scribes to edit its respective journal, hurling invectives at one another. In this respect, Oscar Ameringer of the Illinois section so far has the edge with such choice bits as referring to Lewis—"Dearest duck this side of the milky way; defender of the fat; marshal of the Meal Ticket Legion, sublime keeper of the swag; imitator Mussolini; the dud the carcass of Lewisism; union wreck-er; traitor".

Wrecking a Great Union

Nothing could speak more eloquently about the wreckage wrought by John L. Lewis in the U. M. W. of A. than the membership figures emanated from his own office. According to reports submitted by the Federal Bureau of Mines, 153,829 mine workers are employed in the soft coal fields of Pennsylvania (of course not working regularly). The U. M. W. of A. today has a dues paying membership of 1,374. In West Virginia 119,799 miners employed with 77 dues paying members. In Indiana 24,352 with 10,609 dues paying members. In Ohio 35,543 with 1,061 dues paying members. In Kentucky 64,747 with 77 dues paying members. At the time when Lewis took office as president in 1921 there were a total dues paying membership in the soft coal fields, not including exonerated members nor the districts of Canada, of 365,740. In 1929 this membership in the same territory has dropped to 84,369 of which Illinois has 53,088.

The Fishwick administration in trying to outdo Lewis, now makes an open bid for the support of the operators by charging that Lewis did not have the courage to accept responsibility for an "orderly" retreat such as they claim the economic conditions demanded, but instead, they say, issued his slogan of "no backward step". And yet there have been nothing but retreats and sell-outs, on both sides. In July 1928 Lewis made his infamous decision destroying the last vestige of a national union by ordering each district to obtain whatever terms on working conditions it pleased. In Illinois, Fishwick put through a substantial wage cut with a loss of practically all remaining union conditions and declared it carried in a referendum vote in which a later check-up showed that it was defeated at least three to one. The Fishwick administration is further taking steps toward a new national union of its own.

There could be nothing whatever ever inspiring to the miners no matter

struggle against this policy of the Party is not sufficient or an end in itself. Unless this movement is enriched with a program which sees the roots of the difficulties in a broader field than the cooperative movement, which sees them in the whole present course of the leadership of the Communist International and its American counterpart, it will inevitably lead in the wrong direction.

No Turning from the Left!

It is not difficult for this movement to become—under the provocations of the Stalinists and the maneuverings of the Allanes and other outspoken Right wing elements—an anti-Communist movement, which will end in transforming the cooperatives into a plaything of the reactionaries and discrediting its leaders. The entirely factional and reckless policy of the Party for years has led up to this climax. The militants have the hard job of preventing a move in this direction and guiding it instead into healthy working class channels.

which side wins in this contest, which will be decided by the operators.

However, the pressure of economic conditions, of increased mechanization of the mines with increased speed-up, increased unemployment and deterioration of working conditions and the standard of living, is growing and driving them forward to seek their first solution in the building of a new union capable of fighting for their interests.

Possibilities of New Union

Thus the possibilities for building the National Miners Union are excellent. Yet, as reported in the last issue, the methods pursued by the Communist Party leadership threatens it with being still-born, almost creating a split situation before the union has taken on organized form. The delegates who walked out in disgust from the district convention held at Belleville, Oct. 27, were precisely the most substantial section of the delegates. They were non-Party members, representing mainly the Staunton sub-district which has been in the forefront during this long struggle against the corrupt old union leadership, the territory in which the most militant strike picketing was carried on last year and from which the most substantial locals joined the N. M. U. in a body. Fortunately, these delegates, although they left the convention, are still determined by all means to build the National Miners Union, a decision which members of the Communist Opposition were able to influence in a considerable measure.

What was the issue at the Belleville convention responsible for the delegates leaving. One of principle, program, form of organization, attitude toward the old union officialdom or the coal operators? No, the issue carried to the point of an incipient split was John J. Watt, the president of the N. M. U., known to the rank and file miners as one who earnestly endeavors to build the union and accepts its program. An issue artificially created. Whatever might be said about mistakes made by Watt, one thing is sure; His long time opposition to the entirely false methods pursued by the Party leadership in imposing a complete mechanical control upon this new union movement from its very inception has largely been both a very natural and correct one. It caused him to resign his Party membership about last summer (a reaction which Communists will not endorse). But the retaliation by the Party leadership to this step has become a far worse one; as a matter of fact, one which threatens the interests of the coal miners.

With a situation like the one now existing in the Illinois coal fields, when the main campaign should be the building of the new union on a mass basis, consolidation of its rank and file support, an energetic fight against the Lewis and Fishwick union wreckers, and against the coal operators to recapture lost conditions, the main campaign is made against Watt. To make a case, the *Daily Worker* is resorting to outright fabrications as, for example, that Watt is calling conferences in opposition to those called by the district organization, that the Staunton locals repudiated Watt, etc.

What Kind of a New Union

The question that must be answered by the Party leadership is—what sort of union is intended? A mass organization in which elements who are not Party members but willing earnestly to accept the militant union program, can participate and

hold important positions, or a narrow union established only on the conditions of accepting a leadership holding Party membership cards, even if mechanically imposed? The former is the only possible form that can succeed, particularly at this juncture. This is proved by all working class history and by the very response of the miners, whereas the introduction of the latter narrow conception immediately led to a split situation only narrowly averted.

If these methods are persisted in by the Party leadership it can result in nothing but complete forfeiture of the present splendid possibilities; and, what is worse yet, the creation of a situation in which rank and file coal miners in large numbers, who are ready to give their utmost for the triumph of militant unionism will be driven to anti-Communism.

The National Miners Union has not yet reached a point of facing its greatest and most formidable enemy—the coal operators. It is perfectly well known that while the operators prefer their own trusted henchmen from the old union to the N. M. U., they many times more prefer no union at all. No moment should therefore be lost in taking up immediately the struggle for pressing every-day needs of the miners as a means of organizing and preparing them for the bigger fights to come. That will decide the leadership of the union. Only by applying a correct policy can the Communists prove the superiority of their conceptions and make themselves worthy of leadership.

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Before the Capitulation

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trism are doomed to defeat. A purging without real democracy in the Party is transformed into an uproar, a lottery, a farce, and in most cases falls short of its aim. Before jumping out of the window the Bessedovskys pass happily through all the censuses, all the purgings, and all the unanimous votes.

All the Oppositionists who followed Radek and Smilga have fallen to the lowest level. They have no perspectives. The leading capitulators have left either for country homes or for watering places, abandoning the ranks of the capitulators to themselves. Certain of those who left us find themselves being refused work and even unemployment benefits. Certain capitulators are returning to us. Some of the Saponovists signed the declaration of Rakovsky. I. N. Smirnov is in Moscow. His declaration is finally agreed to, but it has not yet been published in the press; evidently, signatures have to be picked up.

The material conditions of the deportees are very harsh. The high cost and lack of food are very great. The deportees are doing a great deal of theoretical work.

I am informed that a new group of Oppositionists deported from Leningrad (twenty-two comrades in all) have just passed through Tashkent.

October 21, 1929 P.

Moscow Worker (No. 209, September 11): "In the Faucil and the Marteau factories (formerly Goujon), in the construction shop, the Trotskyists defended their resolution at the workers' meeting, and all the members of the Party and the Youth, instead of accepting battle with them and counter-attacking them in a decisive manner, simply went along. There is still tolerance towards Trotskyism. . ."

Moscow Worker (No. 208, September 10): "Trotskyism formerly flourished in the Red October factory, and it is not yet stifled today. In the Frunze factory we have examples of hidden Trotskyists issuing leaflets and certain Communists look upon it in a 'conciliatory' manner. 'It's none of my business'."

Moscow Worker (No. 210, September 12): "In the Kamovniki district there are still some Trotskyist elements. During the period of activity that extended from March to September, 27 Trotskyists were expelled. It must not be forgotten that there exist remnants—unimportant, it is true—of Trotskyism." (Report of the Control Commission to the district conference of the Party).

Youth Pravda (August 25): "The remnants of a Trotskyist organization has been uncovered in a few Youth nuclei (Chvorostin, Starostin, Petrovsky and Armature factories). By a decision of the regional committee, 23 members of the Youth have been expelled, among them many members of the committee . . . of the Party formally, and actually of the Opposition. The Bureau of the Petrovsky factory nucleus has been dissolved."