

Schlesinger's Bright Ideas

He «Abolishes» the Class Struggle; the Stalinists Are Still Deciding «the Line»

The Cleveland convention of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union has approved, as a matter of form, the decision to call a strike of dressmakers in New York at the beginning of next year. The Right wing union further plans to call strikes in half a dozen other cities in order to clinch its control of the industry. All the plans are being made for this unique New York strike and the only thing lacking is the exact date of the call.

We have already commented on the character of this strike which follows the pattern of the last cloakmakers' walkout led by Schlesinger and Company. The latter-day socialist messiahs of the I. L. G. W. U. are going to lead the needle trades workers out of the abyss of the class war and onto the bright highroad of peace and cooperation with the bosses, all through the intermediary of the capitalist state.

SCHLESINGER PRAISES TAMMANY

At the convention, the "socialist idealist" of the New Leader, Benjamin Schlesinger, the union president, "dwelt at length" according to the New York Times (12-3-29) "upon the 'public-spirited and friendly attitude' of Governor Roosevelt and Lieutenant Governor Lehmann in the work of restoring order out of chaos in the New York district. Following his address, the convention ordered that telegrams of appreciation be sent to Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Lehmann for their cooperation. A similar telegram was sent to Mayor Walker."

This nauseating "socialist" bootlickery, this currying of favor with the corruptest elements in American capitalist politics, the white-haired boys of Tammany Hall, is a commentary on the miles upon miles that separate Schlesinger, Dubinsky, Antonini and their socialist party friends from the class interests of the workers.

Why the strike call in the face of this belly-crawling before the capitalist class? The organ of the bosses, the New York Times, explains this "contradiction" editorially:

"It should be recalled that a strike nowadays is fast ceasing to be an unfriendly act. It is rather a brief suspension of domestic activities as part of the process of thoroughly cleaning house. Such was the very short and perfunctory strike early this year in the cloak and suit trade resulting in the establishment of representative government in the industry, plus a 'police' system for rooting out the sweat-shop system. The same aim is now sought in the dress trade and by the same means. The forthcoming strike has the support of the most responsible employers in the dress industry (!). Wages and hours are mentioned in the strike resolution, but there will be no prolonged hostilities on that score (so!) if the main objectives of a stabilized industry and improved working conditions are attained."

A STRIKE—BUT NOT FOR WAGES

The strike is therefore no attack on the arrogant bosses. Schlesinger and the bosses, the Times and Governor Roosevelt, acknowledge that. It is not called for the purpose of improving the conditions of the workers, firstly, because that cannot be done without an attack upon the bosses' profits—which is out of the question by the very avowed nature of the strike—and secondly, because while "wages and hours are mentioned" (yes, merely "mentioned"), "there will be no prolonged hostilities on that score"! In other words, Schlesinger will not make a "fighting point" over wages and hours, i. e., the corner stone for improved working conditions in the trade.

The real purpose of the strike is to chain the workers to the efficiency millstone of the bosses without the presence of a Left wing to hammer away at the chains. The Times reports further (12-5-1929): "The employers said they would cooperate with the union provided the union showed in the strike that it was really in control of a majority of the workers and was able to exert effective pressure on unorganized shops."

By unorganized shops are largely meant shops under control of the Left wing union.

What the strike will be therefore, so far as Schlesinger and the bosses are concerned, is a dress parade of the workers to show that Schlesinger has them in his union, under his control, prepared to accept any scurvy resolution that leaves the workers with the same bad conditions they have suffered under for the last period.

For the bosses, it means the legalization by a union of the conditions that now

obtain in the trade. For Tammany Hall and its officials, it means political capital to be used in election times for the labor vote, as was done in the last election to Norman Thomas' discomfiture. For Schlesinger, it means a big union, steady per capita—which has been sadly lacking for the boys for a long time now—and a measure of power.

The significant thing is, however, that the bulk of the workers involved see the coming strike as a step forward. For them it is a struggle against the bosses, regardless of all that the Daily Worker can say. That this is a bitter and disappointing fact does not mean that it is not a fact to be reckoned with. From that arises again the question of what attitude should be taken by the Left wing.

At first the Left wing union, under the direction of the Stalinists, formally decided at its meeting to stay at work. We pointed out how absolutely untenable such a position was under the circumstances, how ruinous and discrediting it would be for the Left wing and Communist movement. It would mean that while the workers following the Right wing union strike call—and they will unfortunately be the majority of the workers involved—are picketing, the Left wing workers, following the Party's policy, would walk into the shop and work at the machines. Nothing can change the fact that the Left wing workers would be under charge of scabbing. They will never be able to explain away their actions to the Right wing workers who must be won to the Left wing if the Schlesingers, the bosses and Tammany Hall are ever to be defeated.

THE LEFT WING "CHANGES" FRONT

Under the pressure of our criticism, the Left wing made a peculiar "change" of policy, a thoroughly confused and meaningless one. There is not today a single Left

wing worker who can draw a clear conclusion from the "new" policy. Not one of them knows whether the policy is to stay at work while the Right wing is striking, or to go down on strike, or any other alternative.

The only way in which the Left wing can put a spoke into the plan of Schlesinger and the dress bosses, is to prevent the former from getting control of the workers on strike. That can be done only if the Left wing workers are shoulder to shoulder with the Right wing workers in the strike, pointing out to them the concrete lessons of the struggle, fighting alongside of them, explaining the truth of the situation, winning them for a militant policy, carrying on such an agitation in the very heart of the strike that the Right wing workers will begin to press their "leaders" for a settlement in their own interests and not in the interests of their exploiters, something Schlesinger will not accede.

To stay away from the struggle—the present confused policy of the Party is tantamount to that—means to leave Schlesinger a free road along which to drive the workers to the bosses's millstone. It means to deliver a heavy blow to the name and cause of Communism and the Left wing, already badly discredited by the zig-zags of the Stalinists.

AN IMPERATIVE QUESTION

The strike is only a few weeks off. Much time has already been lost by the vacillating tactics of the Left wing. There is still time, though, for a turn in the right direction. We demand of the Party leaders a clear answer to the questions raised by Schlesinger's strike plans, an answer without loopholes and double meanings, an answer that the workers will understand:

What is your policy? What do you propose to do? If the Right wing calls its strike will you require the Left wing workers to stay on the job or join in the struggle to win the dressmakers away from Schlesinger?

If the Party leaders do not answer, the Left wing workers must answer themselves!

«The Freest Country in the World»

Investigation of the brutality of the Los Angeles "Red Squad" in the case of Frank Spector, local secretary of the International Labor Defense, is being pushed by the American Civil Liberties Union.

Spector was speaking on a "free speech corner" on the outskirts of the city when he was arrested and taken to the police station. He said that while being fingerprinted, he was suddenly set upon and beaten by two uniformed policemen. Two plain clothes men and a jail physician stood by without interfering.

Φ

Seven Communists have been arrested and lodged in San Bernardino prison, California, charged with "speaking without a police permit, participating in unlawful assembly, and failure to disperse upon lawful command." Bail has been fixed at \$2,000 each.

Φ

Because he tried to confer as an attorney with a Negro poet who had been arrested by the Los Angeles "Red Squad" Leo Gallagher, attorney for the A. C. L. U., was arrested and jailed for "interfering with an officer." Gallagher was attending a meeting celebrating the 12th anniversary of the Russian revolution, when he was told that someone had been arrested. He went outside, and there found John Owens, Negro poet, in the custody of William Hynes of the "Red Squad". When Gallagher attempted to tell Owen that he would defend him, Hynes swore at him and said "I'll bust you in the face!" Gallagher followed Hynes and Owens to the police station to see that there was no beating, and then returned to the hall. A policeman approached him and told him Owens wanted to see him at the police station. On his arrival there, Gallagher was told he was under arrest and fingerprinted. He was jailed until almost midnight, when he was released by Judge Reed. Owens said that he was waiting to read some of his poems when he was arrested and told he was wanted for "criminal syndicalism."

Φ

Expelled from Nicaragua because they objected to the American marines and to the government's toleration of foreign troops, eight Nicaraguans have been refused admittance to the U. S. and are being held on Angel Island, California, for deportation. Nicaragua is not under any

quota restriction, but under plenty of Wall Street restriction.

The last legal door for escape from serving 5 years in prison for "sedition" was closed for Peter Muselin, Tom Zima and Milan Resetar when the United States Supreme Court refused to consider their appeal from a decision of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. The three workers had been convicted of sedition following their arrest in 1926 at Woodlawn, Pa. The convictions were for spreading seditious word of mouth, for organizing a seditious group, and for distributing seditious literature.

WILSON'S SIBERIAN ADVENTURE ENDS

The bodies of 75 American soldiers arrived in New York last week on board the President Roosevelt. The corpses were brought from the snows of Archangel, Russian Siberia, where they were interred for ten years.

No reception committees were on hand to meet them. No president came to speak over the coffins, no one from the Senate or the House, no generals, no crowds. Their coming was hardly noticed and barely announced. Not all of them are even known, 29 of the coffins were marked with the words "Unknown United States soldier."

Who were they? What brought them to Russia?

They are victims of Woodrow Wilson's brutal, reactionary campaign against the Russian Workers' Republic. When millions throughout the world were celebrating the armistice on November 11, 1918, it was hardly known that President Wilson was maintaining a force of American troops in Siberia which worked hand in hand with the Russian counter-revolution in its attempt to crush the Workers' Republic. No declaration of war was ever made against the Soviets; it was Wilson's unofficial war, his private war carried out at the behest of America's bankers and business men. While Wilson was babbling his hypocritical pledges of world peace, his troops were working to re-establish reaction in Russia. While he spoke of fraternity and equality, American soldiers were engaged in fighting for the restoration of capitalist exploitation and class rule in the land of the Soviets.

The Textile Union

The Party Chops Off Another Head

The Stalinists have executed a new "revolution" in a Left wing union with their customary reckless disregard for consequences. Eli Keller, national secretary of the National Textile Workers union, has just been kicked out of his post, and by the time this appears will probably be officially expelled from the Party as well. Keller is suspected of being a follower of the Lovestone faction. When the new secretary is appointed he will be the third one in the brief period of a few months, Welsbord, the first secretary, having been removed a while ago, and now being on the list for expulsion from the Party, too. In Keller's place, temporarily, has been put an "office committee" with Reid, Rusak, Siskind and Schmees in charge, so that the preliminary preparations for the coming union convention will be in "safe" hands, which will see to it that the Party keeps control and the Lovestoneites, who have a measure of strength in the apparatus, are eliminated.

We are not in the least concerned Keller and his Right wing colleagues, over none of whom have any reason or ground for protesting this recent action. Under Lovestone's regime he and his consorts practiced the same ruinous factional policy against all those who disagreed with his line. He had Voyzey removed in the National Miners Union for his temporary "heresy"; he drove Communist Opposition comrades out of the T. U. E. L. etc., etc. Even after his expulsion, Lovestone remained silent on the scandalous action taken against Watt and similar stunts throughout the country. Keller himself was the one who engineered the faction-controlled New York Gastonia conference so as to prevent our comrades from getting the floor in this "united front" body.

In spite of all this, we reiterate what we have said in the past: These arbitrary, mechanical methods of influencing the organizations dominated by the Party will end in ruining them completely. It marks a total disregard and contempt for the masses of non-Party workers. It ends in narrowing down these movements to the slimmest possible basis. It is not the way to carry on the struggle against the Right wing and its influence on non-Party organizations; it is precisely the way to strengthen it. First the T. U. E. L. Then the miners union. Now the textile. Soon the needle trades union. We ask: What will be done with Hyman, the president of the latter? Will he be removed also? Will the Party continue to pursue its destructive policy of running out of the mass organizations every individual who does not at one time or another agree with some inane—or even some correct—policy that it advocates?

The Stalinists will yet make one palace revolution too many.

Thousands of Russian workers and peasants, poorly armed, ragged, hungry and tired, but inspired with devotion to their cause and faith in their strength, fought on the Siberian fronts in 1918-19 to drive back the White Guards and the imperialist troops of the world—French, British, Japanese, Czecho-Slovaks—and Americans. Hundreds of them fell in the snowy wastes, with words of freedom and the new day on their lips, and foreign bullets in their hearts. Scores of American workers, recruited largely in Michigan regiments, also paid the cost of American imperialist intervention.

The American press rarely speaks of the heroic campaign of the Russian workers and peasants. It passes over in silence the fact that the American troops mutinied in some cases rather than shoot down the Russians with whom they did not have and could not have any quarrel. It does not speak of the black crime of Woodrow Wilson and the American capitalist class. It would like to have the American workers forget.

Over the graves of the Russian workers who fell in Siberia should be inscribed a stone reading:

**HEROES OF THE REVOLUTION
Died Defending the Socialist Fatherland
Against Reaction**

Over the graves of the American soldiers brought back from Siberia should be erected a stone inscribed with this legend:

**VICTIMS OF AMERICAN IMPERIALISM
Murdered by the Hand of Woodrow Wilson
and Wall Street**

Those are the only fitting epitaphs.