

# LETTERS FROM THE MILITANTS

## ANOTHER "VICTORY" IN THE INDEPENDENT

Minneapolis, Minn.

Dear Comrades:

No doubt, by the time this appears in the *Militant*, the *Frelheit* will have reported another victory for the Party in the Minneapolis Independent Workmen's Circle, Branch 89. It seems that the more decisively the Party defeats itself in the mass organizations with its "barricade" policies the more triumphantly it proclaims victories.

The scene this time, was the election of a delegate to the special convention of the order to be held in Boston, January 12, 1930. After weeks of campaigning in the *Frelheit*, and caucusing with every element willing to negotiate, Moses was finally able to gather together a motley support for himself at the meeting.

In the front rank of the supporters of the Communist party policy and its candidate stood such gentry as H. Supak, well-known needle trades boss, S. Segal, proprietor of a men's garment shop, Shulberg novelty perfume manufacturer, and others of this ilk. This alliance is an excellent illustration of how extreme "Leftism" in theory goes hand in hand with open opportunism in practice. Moses is the same one we have many times exposed for the same practices while in the Party. This is the same Moses who shrieked for our expulsion as "renegades" and "counter-revolutionaries".

Now although the open support of the bosses contributed somewhat to the defeat of the Party, the outstanding honors in all justice, must be given to comrade Saltzman himself. Moses, it seems, was doing a fairly good job organizing his group in preparation for the elections, when the aforementioned strode upon the scene. First on learning, that I, Berg, secretary of the local branch was nominated in opposition to Moses, he launched a campaign of attack against him and all those who might support him as "Trotskyists," "renegades" and "counter-revolutionaries", although Friend Berg is quite innocent of the charge.

In reality, Berg is a typical Left wing I. W. C. worker of whom there are hundreds in the organization, loyal, painstaking and unalterably opposed to the policy of the party in the Independent, and to Moses, whom the party has entrusted with the execution of that policy. No factor contributed more towards crystallizing opposition to the party than the charge that all those who supported Berg as a delegate to the convention were "Trotskyites", "renegades" and counter-revolutionaries. Every self-respecting Left winger, not befuddled by the new phraseology (and many who were) rebelled against this schoolmaster threat and voted overwhelmingly for Berg, though normally their vote might have gone to the party.

It is regrettable that our own comrades did not clearly take the lead for the position of the Communist Opposition. No clear voice was raised in defence of Communism and the Communist party as against the distortions and hysteria of the present party misleadership. It is true that the provocations of the Party bring out passionate rebellion from honest proletarians; but a Leninist direction must be given to this healthy movement, or it will be lost in the swamp of reaction and may become anti-Communist in character. It is above all essential at present for the comrades of the Opposition to clearly define before the membership its policy on all questions pertaining to the future of the order. A means must be given the Left wing (now repulsed by the Party) of rallying around Left traditions and preserve them against the black hand of reaction now reaching out for control of the order.

And this raises the question of the immediate development of a definite Left wing group in the Independent, one which will openly, militantly and clearly speak and act for Communist principles, criticising the maneuvers and phrasemongering of the Party and resolutely fighting for the preservation of proletarian policies within the order.

C. C.

BAKERSFIELD, Cal. — Arch-framer Charles M. Fickert, who sent Mooney and Billings to prison, is evidently getting nervous lest they be released. In a speech before the Bakersfield Kiwanis club he pleaded that he is not "persecuting" the two men; he is only fighting the "anarchistic" organizations that are trying to undermine the foundations of the government.

## DIARY OF AN UNEMPLOYED PLUMBER

New York, N. Y.

Dear Comrades:

Inspired by the dazzling figures of projected construction that President Hoover and the lesser presidents of the railroads and business corporations have been announcing so repeatedly for the past few weeks; spurred on by the contentions of President Green in chorus with the whole capitalist press, that as a consequence of the stock market crash the speculative capital will be diverted to "legitimate" business, and primarily to building construction, I had set my alarm clock the previous night for an early morning hour. I had a feeling of confidence that with sufficient effort I would undoubtedly get a job.

Carried on the wings of my new ambition getting up was not difficult although it was still dark. I grabbed the *World*, and—to my great surprise—there was over a column of plumbers' ads. It flashed through my mind that only lunatics invented the myth about a depression in this country. My hand was itchy at the thought of my first pay envelope. I could see the happy face of my wife when at last I announce to her that she can have the money to pay back part of the grocer's bill. Right there and then I decided what creditor can wait longest for his money. But, alas, upon closer examination of the ads, I realized that I was looking at the "situation wanted" section. There were men stating their long experience, high qualities, great speed, excellent references, all around, knowing also steam, lead wiping, etc., etc. and offering themselves to the highest bidder.

Having realized my mistake, I quickly turned the page and without difficulty found the place where once ads for plumbers used to be. As an ugly monument to the prosperous boom days there was the following ad: "Plumber's helper wanted; three dollars a day; husky; one who can work alone; must have own tools. Call early...." They don't want a helper, they want a mechanic sufficiently starved to be willing to work for a helper's wage.

But this was not enough to discourage me this morning. I resolved to set out in search of a job, ads or no ads. I revisited all the contractors I worked for in the past, who for the last six months have been telling me in the same monotonous voice, "nothing doing". "Aren't you in on President Hoover's construction projects?" I asked one of them indignantly. They did not know what I was talking about; they thought me insane.

With every place I had been to, my spirit dropped lower, my confidence of the morning failed me more and more. I was growing desperate. Walking from one end of the city to another, from the Bronx to Manhattan, covering all the plumbing shops on the way, all kinds of thoughts entered my mind. I envied the shop and factory workers. Their industries are concentrated in definite localities, they have their "markets". Although the results might be the same, at least the process of looking for a job is not such a painful one.

Some argue that in the building trades it is impossible to divide the work equally. If the bosses were compelled to hire a new set of men for each building through a labor bureau controlled by the workers, every man in the trade would get his share of work.

As it is now, one must be related to the boss, or lick the boots of the union

officialdom in order to be "fixed up". But what does the officialdom care about unemployment? Only a few weeks ago their salary was raised \$25, making it a total of \$125 a week, besides "extras".

This reminds me. I shall have to borrow some money to pay my dues. Work or no work, this must be paid for otherwise there is a fine imposed. I hope no plumbers died this month. Every dead plumber means an addition of fifty cents to the dues. They sure have been dying lately. Is it because of starvation? —P

## WHO SUPPORTS THE STALINISTS?

Minneapolis, Minn.

Dear Comrades:

If I am to judge the role of the Communist Party today by the Minneapolis membership—especially the Jewish section—as well as its supporters, then I must assert that only a miracle can save the situation. As well believe in Stalin's theory of building socialism in one country.

Let us consider for a moment the standard-bearers of Communism, those who are "strengthening the position of the C.I. line" in the workers movement.

First we have Supak, a manufacturer who exploits from 60-80 workers, and exploits them in the most refined manner, in whose shop the Amalgamated established the union. As soon as the "contract" was completed with the boss, this gentleman was established in the leading councils of the Party.

Then, take A. Sachs, boss plumber, another "comrade", who amassed enough wealth from workers' sweat to build a beautiful home in the fashionable Lake Harriet district.

And Mr. Sell. Every Jewish carpenter or building trades worker knows I. Sell. He is one of the worse exploiters and slave drivers of his men. Yet he also is a standard bearer of the Communist Party today.

Store keepers who donate \$25 at a time to Talmud Torahs and other Jewish bourgeois institutions; sweatshop bosses like Segal; boss barbers like Wolk; American Legion members like Singer and Fink—all these types stand today in the front rank of the Jewish Communist movement in Minneapolis.

Worker-comrades of the Party! What does this mean? Does this not show a dangerous degeneration of the Party support and membership? Is it surprising that the Communist Party which bases itself on an overwhelmingly non-proletarian support, should conduct its bitterest struggles against the Leninist Opposition? It is the duty of all serious Communists, inside and outside the Party to mercilessly pick out and expose the petty-bourgeois elements in the Party and to fight against the wrong policies which allow them to develop in the movement.

Enlist yourself in the struggle to purify the movement from petty bourgeois influences!

MAX KAUFMAN

## PEONAGE ON HIGH SEAS

SAN FRANCISCO (FP)—A story of peonage on the high seas was told in the court of Judge St. Sure in San Francisco, when James Lamey, colored cook on a United Fruit Co. vessel, was awarded \$500 damages. Lamey proved that Capt. George Eppelman had chained him to a stanchion in the forward peak of the ship for four days because he had refused to paint the mess room, since this was the mess boy's duty.

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## DAILY WORKER AND ILLINOIS STRIKE

(The *Daily Worker* recently printed a vicious attack upon the work of the Communist League and its supporters in the recent Illinois miners' strike. The following excerpt from a letter by comrade Joseph Angelo, member of the League and one of the best known militants in the National Miners Union speaks for itself.—Ed.)

Springfield, Ill.

Dear Comrades:

The *Daily Worker* is surely getting rambunctious when it stoops so blankly-blank low as to call me a "stool-pigeon, renegade, etc." in its columns. I did my share in this last strike, more than some C. P. members, as for instance, X, who would not go on a picket line because he might be arrested, or Y who would not address a mass meeting in Springfield because warrants were out for his arrest. I was on the picket line in Springfield and led the Taylorville miners to Auburn where we pulled that mine out on strike. I organized the first relief committee and went out and collected relief for the Taylorville marchers. I spoke at Taylorville and when I found out that although every mine was out on strike in that section, no strike committees were organized, I urged the miners immediately to organize strike committees, not only mine strike committees but committees of other workers as well, yet this was not done because X cannot see further than his nose....

—JOSEPH ANGELO

## ON TROTSKY

Writing apropos the articles of comrade Trotsky that have been appearing in the *Militant*, the Canadian *One Big Union Bulletin* (12-19-1929) remarks in its editorial entitled "The Growing Influence of Trotsky": "He (Trotsky) commands the respect of both friends and foes and yet he never compromises in the slightest degree. The same undaunted spirit reveals itself whether in conflict with Stalin or the capitalist world. For ourselves we can only say we have gleaned more from his works than from those of any other current Russian writer." We would like to suggest that the *O. B. U. Bulletin* reprint, therefore, the article by comrade Trotsky entitled "Syndicalism and Communism" which appeared in a recent issue of the *Militant*. It would be of particular interest to the readers of the *Bulletin*!

## Where to Buy The Militant

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