

YOUNG VANGUARD

- - A Section Devoted to Problems of the Working Class Youth

:-: Whither the American League? :-:

The Enlarged Plenum of the Y. C. I. found its echo in the recent plenum of the Young Communist League of the U. S. A. The "New Turn" and watchwords were all faithfully reproduced according to schedule. Undoubtedly the new zig-zag was very welcome to Rijack, Harvey and Green. It saved them the embarrassing trouble of really explaining the causes for the disintegration of the League. The Y. C. I. plenum provided them in advance with all the necessary explanations. The resolution adopted (*Daily Worker*, February 5-8, 1930) reveals the miserable situation in which the Y. C. I. finds itself—but explains nothing, and lays the basis for further decline.

There is much "self-criticism" in the resolution. Self-criticism plays today a special role in the official Parties and Leagues similar to a safety valve in a steam boiler. Genuine self-criticism could never serve the interests of an opportunist bureaucracy. They indulge in "self-criticism" in order to forestall criticism from below. The bureaucracy use self-criticism as the bourgeois liberals view free speech—to relieve the internal fermentation. So they confess their sins, and the membership feels that a new clean revolutionary atmosphere surrounds them. In reality, the new atmosphere is a most congenial place for committing new errors.

"The struggle of the young workers were often allowed to pass unobserved, and when we did participate in these struggles we too often failed to give independent leadership or to develop the necessary new forms of struggle (New York, Boston, Kansas City, etc.), and to build the league". Really a most remarkable leadership and a most remarkable state of affairs in the League. The silence with which such a statement (which reveals paralysis and impotence) is received in the League, is a sign that the process of disintegration and demoralization is very far advanced.

In the "Third Period" it is necessary to exaggerate without limit (in order to conceal the very increasing bankruptcy of the present leadership). The third period must be confirmed at all costs. Facts are no longer of any importance; so think our youth "leaders". "Thus the economic crisis is causing the young workers to move to the Left at an extremely rapid pace (so!). This growing activity on the part of the young workers finds expressions in the ever increasing number of youth strikes..." Of course in the "third period" it isn't necessary to mention just in what industries these youth strikes are to be observed or to name any of them. Only those who are still lagging behind somewhere in the second period want to have exact and accurate information on these youth strikes. To determine the extent, the main tendencies, the number involved, light or basic industries—all this seems to be of no concern to the marionettes in the leadership of the League.

If anyone is in search for a quotation expressing underestimation of social reformism, here is one of the outstanding examples: "The radicalization of the young workers takes away the base of the social reformists among the young workers and while social reformism remains the chief ideological barrier, which we have to overcome amongst the young workers, there can be no real growth of reformist youth organizations—but only disintegration, providing the Young Communist League plays its role." Everything here is wrong and muddled. It is false to say that radicalization takes away the base from the social reformists and only politically irresponsible people who trifle with the interests of the workers would state such a thing. It is precisely in the period of radicalization that social reformism has all the opportunities of growth among the working class. This period likewise makes for greater opportunities for Communism and makes more fertile the possibilities of its growth. Who will grow faster, which will outstrip the other depends on several conditions, among which the tactics of the Party play an extremely important and decisive part.

An expression of the "Left" danger we are told is "vanguardism". But may we ask, What is the origin of this tendency? Who cultivated and nourished it? Who was it that always flattered the youth and taught them that they played a special, sanctioned role in the struggle against deviations in the Party? Who told the youth that they were the best interpreters of the Comintern decisions? Who always used the youth as a pawn for every zig-zag move on the Centrist chess-board? It is exactly that leadership which today cries loudly against "vanguardism" that is entirely responsible for the growth of such a tendency in the Y. C. I. It was found then to be expedient in the struggle against comrade Trotsky and the Leninist Opposition. But today when dissatisfaction with the course of the present leadership (Shatzkin-Sten) the E. C. finds it necessary to struggle against the very tendencies for which it was responsible, and which it nurtured.

The Y. C. I. and American League plenums were important in that it foreshadows the "new turn" that is to follow in the C. I. and its sections. The "new turn" stated in the resolutions as the need to struggle against the "Left Danger" is a forerunner of the beginning of the new wave of repressions and persecutions against the Leninist Opposition. It foreshadows the adoption again of a Right course by the Stalinist Center. The excuse of the League, that the need of a struggle against the "Left" is the result of sectarian isolation, is just an excuse. The cause of the sectarian isolation is the result of the adventurist and recent ultra-Left course of the International, arising from the spurious theory of the "third period". In this "new turn" the League will once again be the "best interpreters" of the Comintern decisions, and struggle against the "Left deviations"—and prepare with the Party the swing to the Right. Such is the honorable role that the Young Communist Leagues, the world over, are fated to play under the regime of the Centrist bureaucracy.

—GEORGE RAY

The Militarization of the American Youth

A new feature in the militarization of the American youth is taking place in New York. This act, in face of the recent London Conference, and all other peace and disarmament negotiations, belies the attempts of this government to appear as a promoter of peace. A bill has been introduced into the New York State Legislature calling for the conscription of all students between the ages of 10 and 18 to compulsory military training.

To avoid resentment to this open attempt at making soldiers of the American youth the bill states in its title that it is "Instruction in boy scout training and kindred subjects". But even such a covering fails to hide the fact that the aim and purpose of this bill is the preparation of cannon fodder for the coming war. As in all forms of military service, the weak and sick are eliminated, and the best physically are allowed the "privilege" of participation, which in this instant would mean compulsion to service.

The bill if passed would mean that all students, regardless of attendance at private or public schools would be forced to wear the uniform, take 30 minutes drill daily, and special training during the holidays, and summer vacation periods.

Need of Mass Movement

The passing of such a bill would necessarily set a precedent that would undoubtedly be pursued in other states. At the present moment only the Teachers Union of the State has protested against "this attempt to exploit the children of the state and thus keep alive the institution of militarism". That however, is far from sufficient.

This particular attempt of the state of New York must be linked with the whole attempt at militarization of the youth in

Since the close of the World War a group of new sects has appeared in America, made up of self-styled defenders of the American Constitution. The most fervent of these are the American Security League, the Key Men of America, the Army and Navy League, the Constitutional Defense League, and the Ku Klux Klan. Even the old corpse of the Sons of the American Revolution—not to mention the Daughters—has been revived and shouts loudly with the rest.

These organizations have to a degree succeeded in foisting on America a new religion in which the fathers of the revolution are made the saints and the Constitution a holy book. Like all religious fanatics, the makers of the new religion are ready to inflict punishments on anyone who dares to question the truth of their doctrines. To suggest that the revolutionary forefathers were after all only human beings, with no more power to look into the future than we have today—and perhaps with less—is to bring down their wrath upon you. They are equally ready to condemn any one who declares that the Constitution is now obsolete; for they are not realistic enough to recognize that the framers of the Constitution were not inspired by heaven but only by the social and economic conditions of the time in which they lived.

Not content with practicing their jingo religion by themselves, these holy crusaders have done and are doing their best to instill into the American workers a worship of the past and a fear of questioning the American institutions. Like the early Christians the American workers are ready to suffer rather than reason out whether or not these institutions having their foundation in the Constitution serve their interests or not.

As a matter of fact, the evidence is on the negative side. Take, for example, private property and the protection of the individual, comparing conditions today with those of 150 years ago. At that time, most property in America was the result of individual labor. America was primarily an agricultural country, with an abundance of virgin land. Very little capital was necessary to establish a man's independence: Almost anyone was able to get land and clear it for cultivation. After a few years of labor, he would be the owner of property that was the result of his own toil. A man with a few simple tools was able

to carry on a trade without the assistance of a capitalist. The Constitution in those days served to some extent also the interests of the bulk of the population (with the exception of the slaves) who consisted of small farmers and independent craftsmen, or, in other words, of small property owners.

The Exploitation of Labor and the Law

Now let us see if that holds good today. For example, Henry Ford, the outstanding individual capitalist in America today, is the reputed owner of an industry worth at least \$1,000,000,000. Is this billion dollars the result of Ford's own labor? Of course not. It is the result of the labor of hundreds of thousands of wage laborers who work "for" Ford. It is the product of social toil. It is possible under a private-property system for Ford to exploit these hundreds of thousands of men, or to speak more simply, possible for him to legally rob them of by far the greater part of what they produce.

Ford has, during the last four months, laid off 50,000 workers, denying them the right to work in the industry which they, not he, were the builders of. Yet the government would back up Mr. Ford when he deprives workers of the means whereby they live. According to the Constitution, it is his factory, not theirs. Suppose that the Ford workers should demand that he turn over the plant to them. Ford would stand on the right given him by the Constitution which says: "No person shall be...deprived of...life, liberty or property without due process of the law...Nor shall private property be taken for public use without just compensation." And the armed forces of the state would protect him in that right.

But what about the right of the 50,000 workers to life, liberty and the right to work—which is the only "property" of wage slaves? Well, the Constitution and the state laws have nothing to do with that. Property rights come first, and that holds good throughout the nation. Why? Because, though an industrial revolution took place in America, and we have changed from an agricultural country to an industrial, from individual production to social, yet we are still bound hand and foot by a document written in a pre-industrial era. Today a small minority own nearly all the land, the raw material, and the industries, while the greater part of the population are propertyless (proletarians). But we have failed to change our institutions to meet the changed economic conditions.

Abolish Capitalism

To speak of "we", however, is to be inexact. The nation is made up of those who own and those who work. Of these two great classes, one, the minority, namely, the propertied class, still derive benefit from the existing order. It would be futile to expect them to bring about a change in the social system of America. That can only be done by the other class, the property-less ones, when they waken to a realization that a national constitution drawn up 150 years ago is now obsolete and must take its place in a museum as a thing of the past. New institutions must instead be created. We, the proletariat of today know far better than did our forefathers, what the social and political requirements of today are. We cannot let the past stand in our way, nor can we allow a handful of professional patriots and ancestor-worshippers to hold back the wheel of progress. The proletariat must and will brush all such aside and write its own constitution and make its own history.

—PETER HANSEN

TRADE UNION MEMBERSHIP AT STANDSTILL

WASHINGTON—Total membership of all trade unions in the United States in 1929 was 4,331,251, according to a summary published in the latest edition of the Handbook of American Trade Unions, published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. This is somewhat less than the total for 1926. During these three years 10 national organizations, chiefly dual passed out of existence. American Federation of Labor unions report a gain of 126,430 over their 1926 total. The chief gains were made in the construction and public service industries.

WAGE CUTS IN OIL FIELDS

LOS ANGELES—Drastic job cuts have been made in the southern California oil fields, the Los Angeles Times admits in an inconspicuous item on the financial page. January has shown a "marked decrease in employment" the open shop paper states.

RAIL TELEGRAPHERS ADD NEW MEMBERS

ST. LOUIS—(FP)—The Order of Railroad Telegraphers enrolled 307 new members in January.