

The Chicago Conference

The Unemployed Gather

By ARNE SWABECK

CHICAGO—

The Chicago unemployment convention, the first of its kind, sharply denoted, in more than one respect, the present degree of development of the unemployed movement in the United States. It was the first culmination point around this burning issue facing the working class. Called by the Trade Union Unity League, its policies became those of the official Communist Party.

While the crowded one day session brought out many healthy aspects it also glaringly showed the extremely narrow character of the movement to date. Moreover, the policies adopted will, instead of overcoming the difficulty, tend further to narrow a basis where now the broadest scope is not only essential but also possible.

Many Extravaganzas

A summary of the speeches made, all bristling with a healthy militancy, would indicate the complete absence of a serious tackling of the problem—how to set the working masses into motion against their class enemy. They were well typified by the first speaker from the floor, following the main report. This speaker, on behalf of the New York delegation, extravagantly pledged: to build the mass unemployed councils to build the mass "revolutionary unions"—to build the mass Communist Party, etc., etc. Nor were any of the "democratic encumbrances" of "ordinary" labor gatherings apparent at this convention. All was cut ready to order, its first business being the selection of a presidium from a previously made up slate. The presidium then proceeded to select those who were to speak from the floor, as per its announcement from lists submitted in advance by district delegations. This method "gently" eliminated in advance anyone who might not hew closely to the official "line".

On its positive side the convention had some real healthy aspects shown for example in a large Negro delegation, 153 out of a total of the announced 1120 registered delegates. Many splendid proletarian types had answered the call and came clearly evidencing the signs of pressure of the economic crisis drawing workers toward the Left, themselves being attracted by a movement which had fearlessly taken up their battles. Otherwise the composition of the delegation showed but little sweep of the movement beyond the general periphery of the Communist Party and closely sympathetic organizations and groups. 484 delegates came from the Chicago district alone, 150 from Michigan, 73 from Minnesota, 92 from Ohio, 56 from Indiana, 53 from New York and a sprinkling from some other states. There were none of those Southern workers who had taken such splendid part in the strikes of the Carolinas.

To understand the basic cause of the present narrow limits upon a movement which has great possibilities and has otherwise displayed vitality in struggle, should now be the object of serious efforts of all militants. Without that no shortcomings will be remedied. It is wrong to conclude as the Party does, that the present situation is one of a "revolutionary upsurge of the working masses in the United States." Riding the crest of such a wave which is artificially constructed will at best get us caught in the dip, and at the worst prepare us for serious defeat when the offensive begins. The March Sixth and other unemployment demonstrations have manifested splendid working class response, but nevertheless what is most outstanding at the present moment is a downward curve. Everywhere increased capitalist reaction; innumerable jailings of Communist and workers on strike (many delegates were arrested on the way and in Chicago); break-up of demonstrations; intensified speed-up; wage cuts, directly and indirectly; the trade unions, including the new industrial unions, losing members. With this reaction also increasing signs of workers' resistance through small defensive strikes. There have lately been, for example, the strikes of the southern textile workers in Elizabethton and Marlon and those of the northern section in Nazareth and Aberless, Pa., and Plainfield, N.J.

the short so-called strike of the I.L.G.W.U. in New York; the strikes of the Pittsburgh taxi drivers, St. Louis bus drivers and the recent strike of the Pittston anthracite miners. All these were defensive strikes and none under the leadership of the Left. Where the Left does play a role has been on a small scale in the New York cafeteria strikes and the present Flint automobile workers strike.

Such is the picture at the present moment. Within it is contained the visible outlines of the upward curve in which the resistance, as yet isolated, can become a workers' offensive of possibly broad sweep and surely of much sharper conflicts. Each such curve requires its specific tactics. Each has possibilities of growth for the movement and the tactics of one must simultaneously be the preparation for the other.

First Tasks

At this moment the first necessity is the most elementary ground-work. Millions of workers are unemployed and only a small section set into motion. Millions are still blissfully ignorant of their future status as members of a standing army of unemployed. That is the first point to bring home. The bourgeoisie have set to work actively to divide the ranks of the unemployed workers from those having jobs and already with some success to isolate the unemployed movement in its organized expression from the working masses. Can these efforts of the bourgeoisie be effectively defeated in any way than the broadest application of the slogans for work or compensation, unemployment relief, shorter workday, credits for Russia, etc.? Obviously not. Certainly the successful carrying on of the struggle for the unemployed means to spare no efforts really to unite the working class, which cannot be done within the narrow framework of the T.U.U.L. There could hardly be any situation where correct united front policies are so essential than precisely in this one. Could the hypocrisy and deceit of the social reformists and self-styled progressives on the burning issue of unemployment be better exposed than just through a correct and genuine united front policy?

These, however, were not the matters given serious consideration at the unemployment convention. It was keyed up to a very revolutionary phraseology but forgot its elementary tasks. William F. Dunne, in his report for the T.U.U.L. correctly stressed the necessity of unification of all of the struggles of the workers. But from that came the wrong conclusion, in the program of action adopted, entirely to limit the unemployed movement within the framework of the T.U.U.L. Thus the exact opposite of unification. Each union and industrial league is to set up unemployed councils in their industry as a part of the T.U.U.L. General councils, according to the program, are not to be organized where a section of the T.U.U.L. exists. These ad hoc mechanical limits which isolate the movement and confine it to that section of the workers ready to join the "revolutionary unions". There could be no better way of actually preventing a mass basis of struggle for the unemployed. The social reformist will thus have a free field to rally all those workers who by vain search for a job are turning away from capitalist ideology but are not yet ready to join the "revolutionary unions". In that broad field they can continue to sow their seeds of illusions and deceit. And it is precisely also in that field where a united front struggle around the burning issue of unemployment as well as Communist activities has such rich potentialities.

The Program of Action

The program of action lists the immediate demands to be made: Work or wages, unemployment relief, no evictions, 7-hour day, free employment agencies, etc. A total of 17 demands. Unquestionably the few most pressing ones, which are also the most elementary ones, must become the outstanding slogans. It would, however, have been more correct and realistic to advance the demand for the six hour day. More realistic, if for nothing else, in view

of the fact that all of the railroad unions have officially gone on record recognizing the six hour day as a necessity.

But among all these demands no room could be found for the pressing one of large scale credits from this country to the Soviet Union to further insure her successful industrialization and build the bonds of solidarity between the working classes of both countries. The Stalinists will probably answer that the Soviet Union "does not need" such credits. But that is contrary to facts. Simeon Zuckerman, vice president of the Amtorg, reports that orders in the United States for machinery, equipment, etc. averaged \$10,000,000 monthly for the first six months of the fiscal year. In April and May of this year, they fell to \$3,000,000 while orders placed in Germany ran to \$10,000,000 because Germany offered a full 100 per cent credit for eighteen months and on some deals for two years or more. He adds:

"A big Soviet construction program in the Urals—metallurgical plants, tractor and machine plants—were planned with the aid of American specialists, who are cooperating in building. But in the present difficult period, which our leaders never attempted to deny or disguise (so!) credits play an important role. If we get better terms from Europe we must place orders in Europe instead of America."

The Chicago unemployment convention did not take up or attempt adequately to solve the tasks which the present situation had placed upon it. Despite its narrowness, a correct policy could have made a substantial beginning toward laying the foundation for a broad genuinely united movement of the working class against the present capitalist reaction and in the struggle for the unemployed. The Left Communist Opposition must intensify its fight for such a policy.

The Iron Heel Grinds Mexican Labor

The white terror in Mexico continues in still greater force than formerly, there having been within the last few weeks numerous, especially vicious, attacks on the working class organizations on the part of the bourgeois counter revolution. Several working class leaders have been murdered by the present regime in widely separated sections of the country. Recently in an armed clash between a Communist demonstration protesting the government's anti-labor policy, twenty comrades were killed at Matamoros Laguna, State of Coahuila.

The Communist Party and C.S.U.M. (Unitarian Labor Federation affiliated to the R.I.L.U.) have been entirely incapable of resisting these attacks on the part of the reactionary forces. The masses under pressure of the general crisis, with its continuous shut-downs, and unemployment reaching the 700,000 mark, continue in a swing towards the Left. The Communists, however, are not able properly to organize this growing discontent, with the result that the anarcho-syndicalists of the General Confederation of Labor, also suffering at the present time the government's persecutions, are reaping a big harvest in fields of organization and influence. Lower California is becoming the scene of great struggles and the anarcho-syndicalists are showing activities far exceeding those of the Communists in both the Imperial Valley Region and in the mining camps of Santa Rosalia in the central part of the peninsula.

Not only is the Party incapable of carrying its struggle to new fields but is even losing heavily in sections where it formerly had great strength. In the State of Michoacan, the local labor federation, while actually manipulated by the state governor who is posing as a "Left" and a "laborite", has been greatly subject to Communist influence from some time back. Recently the Central Committee ordered the Party comrades in Michoacan to affiliate the state labor federation to the C.S.U.M. or else organize a dual organization dependent on the C.S.C.M. The Michoacan comrades, realizing that no profit could be effected by this policy which the masses could not fail to recognize as having an open splitting character, refused to obey the order of the Central Committee. The Party's organization in the state fell to

Saul Joins Opposition

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Opposition comrades of the Left.

"The way to overcome the serious mistakes in the internal life of our Parties is to do what Comrade Trotsky and others were expelled for wanting to do, namely, to raise the level of political life in the Communist Parties in all their organizational links on the basis of wider internal democracy"

"The bureaucrats have lied to us long enough concerning the contentions of the Opposition. The methods of the bureaucrats has only resulted in the isolation of the Party from the workers, at a time when the objective situation tends for radicalizing the politically backward workers

"In view of these facts I will my strength and energy to the support of the movement led by the Left Opposition. I stand for the adoption of the fundamental views of the Left Opposition by Comintern internationally and of the views of the Communist League of America (Opposition) in the United States. I stand for the immediate reinstatement of the expelled Oppositionists into the Party and Comintern.

"For a genuine World Evishevik Party! For the Proletarian Revolution!"

—GEORGE J. SAUL

Yes, No?

The Daily Worker of July 18, 1930, prints the report made by Stalin at the 16th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. In it, Stalin says:

"The Chinese workers and peasants have already replied by forming Soviets and Red Armies. IT IS REPORTED that Soviet Governments are being formed. IF THIS IS TRUE, I do not find any cause for wonder. There can be no doubt that nothing but the Soviets can save China from final ruin and impoverishment."

"It is reported"; "if this is true"—that is how Stalin speaks of the much-advertized "Chinese Soviet regime". The Daily Worker, and with it the international Stalinist press, have been filled for weeks with columns of clap-trap sensationalism with "wirelesses from Shanghai", about the 80,000,000 Chinese who have established a Soviet regime in Southern China. These stories were used to justify the false policy of Stalinism in China and to confound the "Trotskyist renegades". Stalin now sings another song. Has the Daily Worker been bluffing, as we said it had?

Has an organized Chinese Soviet regime been established? Does the Comintern really know anything about it or not? YES OR NO?

pieces as a result, but the Communists remain for the most part at their posts in the existing state labor federation.

Comrades Eduardo Calero and Jorge Pino, members of the Central Executive Committee of the Young Communist Federation of Mexico, have been expelled for disagreement with the present Party "line". Comrade Calero has issued a statement in support of the Left Communist Opposition, by which step the Mexican Opposition group finds itself reinforced by one of the finest elements of the youth movement.

Pino and also comrade David Alfaro Siqueiros, recently expelled from the C.E.C. of the Party and from the Party itself as mentioned in a former issue of the Militant, are both among those remaining in jail, after their arrest for participation in the May Day demonstrations. They are being held together with a number of Party and Y.C.F. comrades without bail and without trial.

The Mexican section of the International Red Aid, which for a time, under the able (!) "direction" of Enea Sormenti, made a big stir on the basis of plenty of bluff but with no substantial national basis, is unable to do more in the present crisis with mass arrests, terror and almost complete illegality than to shout an occasional slogan or issue a few leaflets in protest. The Party claims that Pino and Siqueiros are government stool-pigeons and that they had themselves arrested in order to gain prestige among the Party rank and file! Naturally they are not receiving the benefits of the "non-partisan" defense of the Red Aid.

—R.B.