

The Coming Dressmakers Strike

The Bureaucratic Leadership Fails to Make Real Preparations

The situation and the problems confronting the needle trade workers and the N. T. W. I. U. at present need a sober and careful evaluation. For years now, the needle trade workers of America have fought against the bosses, against the treacherous brand of leadership, and for a working class trade union. But all their unheard-of sacrifices and hard won conditions, were sold by the Right wing fakers for a few pieces of silver to the bosses. The consistent policy of the Right wing clique, in working hand in hand with the bosses, has been carried on at the expense of the workers.

For years the Left wing, under the leadership of the T. U. E. L. has gathered and molded the discontent and rebellious spirit of the needle trade workers into an organized sentiment. As a result of that work, the Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union came to life, representing all the branches of the trade and endowed with the faithful devotion of thousands of class conscious, experienced fighters.

Since its inception, the N. T. W. I. U. has had a number of very instructive experiences, which must serve us as a guide in discussing the tasks facing the union at present. Not one of the lessons, whether it was a victory or a defeat for the workers, can be lost sight of in our present preparations for a general strike of the dress makers, who are a very important branch in our union.

The Strike Plan

The demands and the plan for preparation of the dress strike to be called this coming February, were adopted by the shop delegates' council on October 6, followed by a meeting of the membership a week later. There is no doubt that the question of the strike in its entirety must time and again be elaborated upon and discussed in a far different manner than it was at the delegates council. The discussion certainly did not reflect the importance of the strike issue. On the contrary, there was no desire on the part of the delegates supporting the official point of view to open the discussion, which reveals the very abnormal situation that must be remedied. Why was there no spontaneous desire on the part of the delegates to discuss the plans and demands? Why did the voice of the shop have no desire to speak? Because the atmosphere is stifling, hostile to any view opposing the official decision and leadership — mechanically controlled to such an extent that there is no more place for reason.

New and undesirable precedents are gaining a foothold in the council. No more reports, which should properly precede the discussion. Just "concise" minutes as a matter of record. The reports have been eliminated so that the manager—or as at present, the secretary of the executive committee of the staff—should be assured of not making any deviations.

The discussion that take place is invariably centered upon an attack on those opposing the official "minutes", thereby undermining the interest of the council delegates. The lack of attendance of the elected delegates has caught the eye even of the official leaders—blind as they are to existing facts and conditions.

The demands for the strike and the plan for preparation was brought down to the council on a string of thin air, completely detached from objective and subjective conditions existing at present in the trade and the union. There was not even an attempt on the part of the leadership

to give the delegates a bird's eye view of our strength, the strength or weakness of the enemy (the bosses and the Right wing), the general situation, etc. The demands brought down to us, were not in conjunction with, nor an outgrowth of, a thorough analysis. They were handed down to the council in the same manner as changes in organizational forms and personnel were previously handed down. Take it or leave it—like it or not.

The Strike Demands

The demands are the following: Week work, seven-hour day, minimum wage for various crafts, unemployment insurance. Is there anything wrong with the demands? The dress makers have fought real militant battles for the abolition of piece work. We all know that piece work is degrading for the worker, that it is a source of more profit for the bosses and fierce exploitation for the workers.

It is high time for the Left wing to sound the need for week work, and lead the workers in a struggle for it.

Equally with the seven-hour day, warranted by the surplus number of workers as well as the simplified processes of production. More than that: even a still shorter working day would be applicable to the needs of the workers.

Unemployment insurance is on the order of the day.

Then why such apprehensions on the part of the membership? Why such fear at the outcome of the strike? And here is the key to the situation.

The N. T. W. I. U. convention last June decided that our orientation must be towards a general struggle in the various branches, separately or a few together, to be judged by prevailing conditions and circumstances. Four months passed and what was done in the union to raise the sentiments and inspire the workers for struggle under its leadership? Those were months of changes not for the better, but for the worse. Instead of expansion there has been a diminution of our forces. Instead of a further penetration of unorganized shops, the Right wing shops, instead of giving leadership to the workers against the treason of the Right wing officialdom we have narrowed down our base. All for the sake of securing unquestioned "unanimity"—the last thing a labor union should strive for.

The feeling of desperation that the needle trade workers received from the last strikes of the cloak and fur workers has not been wiped out by any constructive and systematic organization work.

The needle trade workers are quite aware of the fact that the International or the Amalgamated will not solve their problems, will not lead them in struggle for better conditions. But they are also convinced that the wrong policies and criminal neglect of constructive work for our union has given the A. F. of L. fakers a breathing space too long.

We see a report in the press that many hundreds of cloak makers, unemployed furriers, come to a mass meeting. They come to hear the message of the Left wing because they have no faith in the A. F. of L. fakers. The cloak and fur workers have their hope in the Left wing that lead them in such great struggles during, and some time after, the Joint Action fight. But all these workers are out of our ranks organizationally and don't entrust their daily struggles to us only because the Industrial Union leadership has made so many blunders.

To regain the faith and trust of the workers, the Industrial Union must begin real organization work. Every member, regardless of political beliefs, must be drawn into the work. Wide-spread, immediate colonization of union members in non-union shops, concentration and concentration on a substantial number of shops controlled by the Right wing. The outcome of the strike will also depend on the strength of the wedge that we will success in driving into the International, shop conferences from organized and unorganized shops; not fake, spectacular press reports, but well prepared and carefully planned conferences as will raise the spirit of the workers rather than dampen it.

Preliminary strikes in shops with comparatively worse conditions, street meetings, especially in Italian and Spanish languages. The building up of an active

on as the moving force during the period of preparation and the strike itself. General meetings in all localities, bulletins and systematic publicity, and a number of other means must become the task of the day.

The Danger to the Strike

In a word, it is not in the demands that the trouble lies, as the critics of the Lovestone group would have us believe. The principal danger confronting the strike is the one that was so ruinous in the last strikes of the Industrial Union: bluff instead of solid preparations. It must be said now, and quite openly: Unless our union begins with serious work of preparation, drawing in all elements ready to

International — demanding organization — are organized into groups by us to carry on a systematic fight against Schlesinger; unless the Left wing changes its disastrous policy of regarding every worker outside the Industrial Union as a "social Fascist"; unless these steps are taken—the coming dress makers' strike is certain to end just like the furriers' strike: in a debacle.

It is up to the serious Left wing militants in the union to compel serious preparations. The conditions of the workers make it possible to have a successful strike. What is needed is that the Industrial Union fulfill its tasks.

—SYLVIA BLEEKER

Sylvan Pollack for the Opposition

In response to a demand for a reply to the questions mentioned below, comrade Sylvan A. Pollack sent the following statement to the Central Control Commission of the Party. His endorsement of the standpoint of the Left Opposition is a further indication of the ferment taking place in the Party, and the refusal to swallow the opportunist-adventurist policy and leadership foisted upon the movement. Comrade Pollack, editor of *Solidarity*, the official organ of the Workers International Relief, and its agit-prop director, has been a member of the Party since its foundation in 1919, and active in its ranks and in the class struggle in various fields. While in the anthracite coal region as district organizer for the International Labor Defense this July, he was arrested, charged with sedition, and is now out on bail awaiting trial. For a couple of years, he was on the *Daily Worker* staff, and assisted in the relief work during the Passaic, Gastonia, and New Bedford strikes. Militant readers will recall the series of articles on the textile situation he wrote under the pen-name of Frank Bromley. Comrade Pollack, in past internal Party disputes, was a supporter of the old Ruthenberg group. His study of the question since the first expulsion for "Trotskyism" have convinced him, like many others, of the correctness of the Opposition standpoint, and the need for its adoption by the Party.

In your letter of October 9, you ask me three questions which I will reply to point by point.

Question 1. "What is your opinion about Trotskyism and the Trotskyite group in the United States?"

The "Trotsky" group (Left Opposition), is conducting a campaign for the reestablishment of the Leninist line in the American party as well as in the Communist International. For that reason I agree with the program of the Communist League of America (Opposition) and believe that all party members and Communist sympathizers should support it. As one who has been a member of the Communist Party since its formation in September 1919 and who has always actively participated in the class struggle, I have, after long and objective study, come to the realization that only by supporting the Left Opposition and adopting its point of view will the international Communist movement regain the strength it had when led by Lenin and Trotsky.

Question 2. "What in your opinion, is their line and activities in relation to the Party and the Comintern? And in relation to the class struggle in general?"

The Left Opposition, under the leadership of Comrade Trotsky internationally and the Communist League here in the United States has formulated the correct policies that must be followed by the Communist movement, that is, a return to the program of Lenin. The national socialism that has been substituted for the Leninist position of the Comintern, since Stalin usurped power, must be ended, together with his un-Communist program of "socialism in one country." Comrade Trotsky and the other exiled members of the Russian party must be reinstated and allowed to participate freely in the work of the Party in the Soviet Union. The same rights should be given to the Opposition in the American Party as well as in all other Communist Parties. The expelled members of the American Party should be reinstated and give their aid in the American class struggle. With the unemployment situation becoming more serious and the possibility for mass work especially bright, a Communist party united on Lenin-

ist basis is of paramount importance.

Question 3. "Do you have any sympathies whatsoever, with them, or do you agree with the Party that they must be exposed and fought relentlessly as enemies of the Party and of the Comintern and as enemies of the working class, with whom we can have no fraternization, no sympathies whatsoever?"

As my reply to the other questions point out clearly, I do not consider the Left Opposition as enemies of the party or of the working class. In my opinion, the program of the Left Opposition, which is the program of Lenin, will help the Communist movement recuperate from its defeats of the recent past and go forward to victories. Instead of being "renegades," as the supporters of the Left Opposition are called in the official Party press, they are the real defenders and exponents of Communism. In supporting the Left Opposition, I am only continuing the line of revolutionary Marxism I adopted when I joined the Communist Party at its foundation in 1919, the same line defended by Lenin and the real founders of the international Communist movement. Instead of putting ridiculous, "Inquisition" questions to Communist militants who differ with the ruling group, we should raise the demands that the Party must eventually adopt:

Reinstate Trotsky and the other expelled Bolsheviks to their rightful places in the ranks of the Communist International!

End the campaign of suppression of all working class expression in the Communist movement!

Stop the false estimation of events that have become the order of the day in the "third period"!

For a real, and not a stupid, bureaucratic struggle against the liquidators of the Right wing.

Unite the Communist movement for an offensive against the capitalist class!

Long live the international Communist movement! Long live the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics!

SYLVAN A. POLLACK

As we go to press, we receive word from Chicago that comrade Ida Levin has been expelled by the Stalinists for her support of the viewpoint of the Left Opposition. Expulsion, ignorance, and terror—these are the answers the Party leaders give to the militants who raise questions of principle.

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