

The Benefits of Hillmanism

By ALBERT ORLAND

Since the Amalgamated Clothing Workers embarked on the policy of class collaboration, a great change has taken place in the organizational and social outlook of that once radical labor union. From an organization whose chief concern was the well-being of its membership and whose social guide was the principle of the solidarity of labor, the A. C. W. has been transformed into an agency for the promotion of rationalization in the clothing industry, with the workers being the victims of all the concomitants of capitalist rationalization.

Militant Collaboration

The leadership of the Amalgamated has been selling this sort of unionism to all: manufacturers, workers and the "public." All are welcome to share in its benefits, and, we are assured, all are anxious to avail themselves of the opportunity wherever it has been given them by the generous hand of the A. C. W. leadership. Those who oppose the protection and the benefits of Amalgamated control, as we are enlightened, are either stupid or incorrigible fanatics and dogmatists. Not only have Hillman and his associates displayed sufficient courage and aggressiveness in following the line of class collaboration policy, but they have given it widespread publication as the last word in trade unionism. The A. C. W. has for years promulgated this policy in its official organs, giving numerous demonstrations of its workings and even taking pride in its achievements.

What is the essence of this Amalgamated "new unionism"? Who has benefited by it, and what are the real conditions of the Amalgamated members in the shops and out of the shops, as a result of the application of the new policy? Let us analyze this policy and look into the facts.

The principle of union-employers cooperation is not new. It has been advocated and practiced by all reformist unions. It consists of the recognition of the common interests of capital and labor and of the necessity of cooperation for the common benefit of both.

The A. C. W. leadership has not introduced any new elements into this conception to justify its claims to being the most "advanced" trade union in the labor movement. It has, however, proved able to camouflage this policy of class collaboration with such names as the "new strategy", "militant unionism", realistic militant unionism, etc., and for that it certainly deserves credit and admiration as no other trade union in the country.

In practice, the A. C. W. policy expresses itself in the following manner: The union and the employers cooperate in reducing labor costs by increasing production, eliminating waste, applying efficient methods, eliminating strikes and promoting peaceful relations between both parties. The workers are to receive the benefits of increased production in the form of union wages and hours.

What the Bosses Want

Any clear-minded person will easily understand that employers do not need the cooperation of a labor union in the rationalization of their enterprises, that technical management can be procured outside of trade union offices and that non-union shops are no less concerned about efficient methods of production than union shops. What an employer can, however, expect from a labor union is cooperation in eliminating strikes and securing uninterrupted production.

The A. C. W. entered the field of rendering that kind of service to the clothing manufacturers and has proved able to measure up to its task. It has even gone further than that. It has offered them the services of all the resources of the organization, cooperation in the shops by efficiency experts it maintains, credits from its banks in addition to guarantees of peace and uninterrupted production. The A. C. W. boastfully claims to have put the union shops in an advantageous position in comparison with non-union shops in regard to competition, that it has actually made the open shop a non-paying proposition for employers.

Hillman, surely, cannot be denied recognition for accomplishing these ends. In fact, he has been compensated for his achievements by high praise from all sorts of patriotic and reformist quarters and

was even accorded medals for his contributions to the cause of social peace. But what benefits have the workers in the clothing industry received in return for their cooperation? What has rationalization given them and what are their prospects?

Thousands of Amalgamated members have been thrown out into the streets, replaced by machinery or eliminated as "waste in industry" by A. C. W. efficiency experts. They are doomed to starvation, victims of Hillman's "militant efficiency unionism."

Is the A.C.W. officialdom aware of these facts? What are its answers to them? In *Advance*, official organ of the A. C. W., of March 14, 1930, we read from a speech delivered by an A. C. W. organizer at a conference of the Railway Clerks, the following reference to these facts:

"The policy of cooperation for efficiency meant the gradual elimination of the inefficient shops and with the dying out of these shops a good many people lost their employment temporarily. We were compelled to face that, and in the working out of the process the temporary hardships of the displacements have been compensated for a hundred fold in the tremendous improvements in wages and conditions that have been made possible in a more efficient industry."

Here is an open admission that the policy of cooperation is responsible for the great unemployment existing in the clothing industry. But the Amalgamated bureaucrat sidetracks this question by inserting the meaningless "temporarily" and making references to "tremendous improvements," apparently hoping in this manner to knock any possible critic off his feet.

What "Temporary" Means in the A. C. W.

But what has become of the "good many people who have lost their employment temporarily"? Have they been put back into the industry? Or were they eliminated "temporarily" until forced to drift into other occupations, or died of starvation? There was a case a few years ago with 150 cutters of the Chicago organization who were eliminated by the joint decision of the union and Hart, Scaffner and Marx for a compensation of \$500 a piece, and eliminated permanently with admonitions never to come back because the industry did not need them any more. And the cutters were the aristocrats in the industry. This case can be characterized as the siren of "efficiency unionism." For what happened to the Chicago cutters a few years ago has since become a daily occurrence and a matter of routine in the clothing shops under Amalgamated control. Hundreds of cutters and thousands of workers from other branches have been eliminated without any compensation to face starvation and misery. There are today hundreds of "aristocrats" permanently unemployed in the New York market, members of the once powerful Cutters Local 4. The membership of this local has dwindled from 4,000 to 2,000, with more than one-third permanently unemployed.

Now how about the "tremendous improvements" in wages and conditions referred to by the A. C. W. organizer in his speech? Have the wage standards been raised or lowered as a result of the increased production? Are there any wage standards at all in A. C. W. shops outside of those fixed by the employers and sanctioned by the officials of the Amalgamated? Are there any price committees in the shops? And, by the way, why was it necessary to abolish the week-work system which has been so fiercely resisted by the workers and forced on them by the Beckermans and other agents of Hillman?

That the piece-work system has been forced on the workers as a scheme to increase the speed up and reduce wages is given testimony by the officialdom recently on the occasion of the introduction of piece-work in the Montreal market. In *Advance*, July 11, 1930, under the caption "News from Montreal" the following explanation is given by the Montreal officialdom:

"It has become increasingly important to give the manufacturers who are willing to stand by the union a fair chance to do business in competition with the 'illegitimate' (meaning the non-union)

manufacturers. The prevailing system of week-work in the Montreal market has placed the inside bona-fide manufacturers at a disadvantage in comparison with the 'illegitimate'."

Hillman Gives the Bosses a Break!

The manufacturers are given a fair chance through the piece-work system to cut the wages to the level of the non-union workers in order to be able to compete with non-union shops. The increase in efficiency does not seem, at least in this case, to warrant any "tremendous improvements" in wages. One can even conclude from the above explanation that this "efficiency" is produced by the speed-up forced on the Amalgamated members by piece work and other schemes.

And how about the hours of work? Has the A. C. W. made any attempt to shorten the hours, a reform so imperative at the present time and surely warranted by an efficient industry? Except for adopting resolutions at conventions, nothing has been attempted in that direction.

The "new, militant, realistic unionism" of the Amalgamated, when stripped of its attractive coverings, emerges as a genuine reactionary kind of union-employer cooperation, a boomerang to the workers. This "militant" unionism has in a few years wiped out all the gains the clothing workers had enjoyed in past years as a result of their struggles, it has ruined their lives and hopes. This "unionism" can only be maintained by force and deceit. Such a regime has been established and perfected by the Amalgamated bureaucracy.

Hillman boasts of his banks, cooperative apartment houses, and office buildings. The workers know that all these have been built on their sweat and blood, and enjoyed by manufacturers and union bureaucrats, while they suffer and starve. The day is not far off when the clothing workers will arise to action and radically change the leadership and the policies of the Amalgamated.

Rose Karsner Bus. Manager

At a recent meeting of the national committee of the League, comrade Rose Karsner was appointed to take over the business and financial management of the Militant. Comrade Karsner has had a wealth of experience in the movement and her work will be of great assistance to the stabilizing of our paper. Plans are already under way for conducting a campaign to insure the Militant and make it possible to return to a weekly status. As a first step in this work, an appeal has just been made to the branches to raise a small quota for an emergency. The response to the appeal—which is only little over a week—has been good: The Minneapolis comrades sent in \$20.00; New York, \$22.00; Toronto, \$37.00; Chicago, \$23.00; Boston, \$5.00, and the others still to be heard from. We urge all our comrades and supporters to give the new manager the measure of cooperation that will make our further work secure.

"The Draft Program of the Communist International" by L. D. Trotsky is a thorough analysis of the principal theories animating the course pursued by the leadership of the International since 1923—the theory of socialism in one country and the question of the character of the revolution in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. The American edition is 35 cents a copy and can be bought from the Militant at 25 Third Avenue, New York City.

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The Anti-Soviet Plot

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comrade Trotsky's secretary, Georgi Butov, to death, while Stalin's secretary was enabled to go abroad and turn White Guard.

The Stalinist regime stood comrade Jakob Blumkin against the wall and shot him—a dastardly crime they have never dared to defend publicly. Then Stalin appointed Mr. Agabekov to Blumkin's post. Agabekov went abroad to join the army of the counter-revolution!

An accusation is now made against Briand, and justly. But in 1927, when the Briands demanded the withdrawal of comrade Christian Rakovsky as Soviet ambassador to France, because he had signed the Platform of the Opposition, Stalin and Bucharin withdrew Rakovsky. Who replaced the Rakovskys? Bessedovsky, who helped to expel Rakovsky in the Party nucleus! Bessedovsky, who fled through the back window of the Soviet Embassy in Paris to join the ranks of the enemies of the proletarian dictatorship!

In the United States, Serebriakov, (who later capitulated) was taken out of the Amtorg. His place was taken by the Delgasses. Delgass has now joined the counter-revolutionary hue and cry against the Soviets; he has become the darling of the New York White Guards.

The charges name Lord Churchill. They might have added the name of his colleague Chamberlain, who said England would recognize Russia only when Trotsky is stood against the wall and shot. Is there any difference in essence between that command, and the reality—the fact that comrade Trotsky was finally deported to Turkey; the fact that comrade Rakovsky is in mortal danger in Barnaul, threatened with death by Stalin's refusal to transfer him to another climate; that Muratov, ex-military head of the Moscow district (what Kalinnikov took his place?), is desperately ill in Siberian deportation; that comrade Zinzadze wracked by tuberculosis, is kept in solitary exile; that hundreds and thousands of others are suffering the same fate?

We repeat that the Stalinist regime, with the whole state and party apparatus at its command, was so occupied with hounding and suppressing the Bolshevik Opposition as "agents of world imperialism", that the real agents of counter-revolution were enabled to mobilize the strength they have now been shown to have.

Stalin and the Right Wing

The Stalinist clique, which now admits that the conspirators were staking their cards on the victory of the Right wing (Bucharin-Rykov-Tomsky), was the intimate partner of this very same Right wing in the campaign to strangle the Bolshevik-Leninists. To the extent that this campaign was successful, it was a victory, not for the proletariat, but for the Kondratievs, the Ramzins, the Ustariakovs, the Chamberlains and world imperialism as a whole.

The capitalist press is making a sickly effort to minimize the whole plot. Naturally. They wish to lull the workers into a false security. But the vanguard will not be deceived. The Thermidorian danger, the danger of the growth of the counter-revolutionary forces, is a real one in the Soviet Union. Soviet Russia, isolated from the capitalist world, encircled by the might of world imperialism, still has a strong base for capitalist elements and capitalist restoration. The advances of the Soviet Union, while it liquidates some of these elements, sharpen the contradictions inherent in an isolated proletarian state and bring the restorationist dangers to a head. The Stalinist regime accentuates these dangers.

Oscillating between a proletarian line and a petty bourgeois line, Stalinism is unable to mobilize properly the international revolutionary resistance of the workers. This task, now more imperative than ever in the face of the recent exposures, requires a Leninist course, a Leninist regime in the Party, a Leninist policy towards the proletariat at home and towards the international movement. It requires a Leninist leadership. This leadership is dispersed, in prison and exile. It must be recalled and reinstated.

The counter-revolution has raised its ominous head. The Bolsheviks, the fighters and leaders of the October revolution, are needed in the Party to crush the threat to the Soviet Union and the international revolution.

—S-N.