

In the Amalgamated A Worker on Hillmanism

JUSTICE FOR ORGANIZED WORKERS, by
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In simple narrative form the writer of this booklet, a rank and file member of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union gives an account of his experiences with the officialdom of the union, of the conditions in the shops of the policies of the organization and the existing regime that makes the maintenance of these conditions and the continuation of these policies possible.

The facts dealt with in this book are not of the out-of-the-ordinary type with which the membership of the A. C. W. is not familiar. If such facts as are mentioned in the book were recorded by every member of this union they would fill volumes. But just for that very reason, they are of importance and significance. The average member of such unions as the A. C. W. has been accustomed to the rotten actions, and practices of his officials that his sense of justice has been dulled or atrophied and he endures them indifferently without protest. This condition is in a great measure responsible for the persistence of the evils in the trade union movement, and for that matter in all labor organizations.

A Ten Year Struggle

The writer of this booklet appears before the reader as a brave fighter for justice and a defender of the elementary rights of the rank and file in the trade union organization. For a period of ten years he carries on his struggle against the A. C. W. officialdom and their treacherous policies. The struggle starts with a minor official of a Brooklyn local for his arbitrary settlement of a grievance in the shop where the writer was employed whereby the workers suffered a loss of from ten to fifteen dollars a week; it expands to the higher offices until it involves the entire machine of the A. C. W. administration, including the so-called impartial machinery and the Unemployment Insurance offices, the official press of the union, and even the general press. All these struggles are carried on in a legalistic manner on a constitutional union basis and with the writer as the participant and victim. In the end he suffers a crushing defeat. He is summarily suspended and deprived of all chances to continue his fight within the organization.

The facts brought out in this fight present to us a picture of the most rotten type of a reactionary union, steeped in graft and corruption functioning in the interests of the bosses and the fat boys of the "machine", demoralizing the workers and ruining their lives. Graft and corruption permeate the organization from the very bottom to the very top, from the "inner circle" of the favorite supporters of the local "machine" to the highest offices of the union and the "impartial" chairman. It is a vicious ring of conspirators and betrayers of the clothing workers in which the officials of the A. C. W. and the bosses are linked through numerous offices and institutions: an intricate network in which the interests of the officials and bosses are closely interwoven and where the workers are entrapped and mercilessly exploited. The official is the boss, the union the administrator, the judge and the executioner and from his arbitrary rule there is no redress and no escape as long as the worker is in the industry.

But all this is done not in the open and in public but under the cover of "progressiveness", "militancy" "realism" and by a fine system of organized publicity that is deceiving not only the outside world but even the membership of the A. C. W. which makes the fight against it the more difficult and complicated. It is worth while mentioning here the vulgar phrase "company union", so frequently heard from the lips of the official Communists to denote the A. C. W. The A. C. W. is a thousand times worse than a company union but just because of that more harmful and the methods to be used against it are therefore also more complicated.

The booklet of Louis Kirschbaum is a most valuable contribution in this respect. It helps tear off the mask of the conspirators and traitors and gives the lie to the hypocrites and pen prostitutes in the liberal and "progressive" ranks among whom we find so prominent a personage as the editor of the official organ of the A. C. W., *The Advance*.

However, in spite of the great merits of the book for which we recommend it to every worker, it contains ideas and notions that are confusing and misleading. These ideas and notions are partly due to

the liberal ideology of the writer which bursts through every line of the book and partly to his ignorance of the general labor movement.

False Remedies

The writer lays too much stress on the differences between the immigrant unions and the unions of "native Americans" which are more imaginary than real, and he overlooks the specific conditions in the industry that are of economic origin. Likewise, the writer in spite of his rich experience in the A. C. W., which should have taught him the proper lessons in regard to methods to overcome the evils against which he is fighting, arrives at false conclusions and suggests remedies whose adoption without a correspondingly radical change in the policies and leadership, would just help to perpetuate these evils by thickening the mask and complicating the system of deceit which the A. C. W. has so carefully elaborated, and to which his own failures are largely attributable.

The writer sharply criticizes the extremists and philosophers contending that they are blind to facts. But the facts he cites in his little book have been known to the "extremists" long before the writer came into contact with them, and it is on the basis of these facts that their theories were formed, while the writer after a decade of struggle and study emerged as confused and ignorant in regard to solutions as the average worker who is not class conscious. His vague liberal ideology inclines him in the direction of parliamentary and legal reforms which are always used as a cover for false economic foundations. He fails to see the roots of the evils ravaging the labor movement. These roots lie on an economic plane and not on a parliamentary one. A true militant union, based on class struggle policies is the only guarantee for justice for organized workers. A leadership that truly represents such policies will not resort to methods used by a reactionary bureaucracy. Methods must correspond to aims, and the aims of a trade union organization, which are its bases are economic.

The author suggests a series of remedies of a constitutional nature, forgetting that he himself fell victim to these constitutional by-laws, because they were either used against him or disregarded in cases where they could be used in his favor. If all the suggestions of the writer were adopted the "machine" would be greatly strengthened and the struggle more complicated. If "impartial" chairmen can be bribed and lawyers "neutralized" and courts "influenced", as the author clearly shows in the book in what degree would the cause of justice be enhanced through a multiplication of laws courts, judges and other paraphernalia of class rule? It is clear that the cause of justice would be harmed in the degree that these laws, courts etc. were increased, so long as the foundations of the union remained untouched, because graft, corruption and deceit would increase.

The author, however, is thoroughly consistent in his line. His suggestions are no mere slip but an elaborate system of reforms of a purely political character which to be realized, must be completely torn away from a class basis. He suggests, for example, as one of his major remedies the creation of an Industrial Forum for impartial investigation of the truth about the aims and methods of the labor movement. Does the author seriously think that the betrayers of labor like Hillman Green or Woll would participate in such forums? Would the "impartial" chairman and commercial lawyers become pure idealists?

The Fantasy of a Forum

The writer complains pathetically that there is no means of learning the truth at present because of the absence of such a forum. Does not the writer thereby admit that he has not learned the truth in spite of his experience, or that he also wants Hillman and his conspirators to learn the truth, or perhaps to expose the truth about themselves to others? Surely, he does not mean that. Whom he possibly has in mind in connection with a Forum is individuals in the labor movement who are not connected with union offices. But does he presume that these individuals are at present not seeking and investigating the truth and doing all in their power to spread it?

There is one suggestion by the author which might be constructive and that is his appeal to the individuals of all groups in the labor movement belonging to different political schools to unite in questions

where the cause of justice is involved. But this suggestion is made as a mere gesture to please some radicals. The author's eyes are turned in the direction of "pure" impartial men and women who have no philosophical theories to prejudice them and whose sole purpose in the movement is to serve justice, seeing the guarantee for it in constitutional by-laws.

The practical remedies proposed in the book, being of an idealistic or abstract nature are not only worthless but even harmful to a degree, because they are misleading. Some of them could at best be of some use only as secondary demands or slogans and then only on condition that they are subordinated to the major aims, but not as remedies for the evils against which the author is conducting his struggle. These evils can be removed only by an organized struggle of the class conscious workers guided by revolutionary trade union principles. If justice for organized workers is to become a fact the workers must strive not for constitutional or paper guarantees but for real control of their unions for the reorganization of their economic foundations.

Notwithstanding all the defects of the book we recommend it to our readers.

—ALBERT ORLAND

ATTENTION!

Members of the Communist League and its sympathizers who have received the Christmas ten cent coupons are urgently requested to send in their collections to the national office as fast as possible.

All branches of the League are asked to put the Christmas campaign on the agenda of their next meeting. Find out through a roll call how many members received the coupons, and how many remitted to the national office. Those who have not sent in their collections should account at the branch meeting. Those who have not received any coupons should make contributions. The national office is working under great handicaps and every individual member is personally responsible for deficiencies in the administrative work. Each member must take it upon himself and herself to make the Christmas campaign a financial success so that the necessary improvements can be made at the center which will enable us to function more efficiently by increasing the staff. No organization can function properly without the necessary staff at the center. At present we have only one member on the staff. This is an intolerable condition, and must immediately be remedied. It is up to each individual member. We must each take upon ourselves the personal responsibility and the duty to make the urgent improvement without further delay.

Collect on the Christmas campaign and send your collections to the national office or through your branch secretary at once.

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HOW STALIN PROTECTED THE BLOOD OF BUCHARIN

In his concluding remarks to the Fourteenth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, (1925) Stalin declared in answer to the Left critics of Bucharin and the Right wing:

"Are these facts known to the Opposition? Of course they are. Why, then, do not these comrades cease raising a clamor against comrade Bucharin? How much longer are they going on with their talk about comrade Bucharin's mistake?"

I know the mistakes that certain comrades made for instance, in October (November) 1917, and they are so great that the mistakes of comrade Bucharin are hardly worth speaking of in comparison. These comrades did not merely go astray at that time but they had the 'impudence' to infringe on two occasions extremely important resolutions of the Central Committee, resolutions adopted under Lenin's leadership and in his presence. Nevertheless, the Party condoned these errors as soon as the comrades in question admitted their mistakes. In comparison with the comrades of whom I am speaking, comrade Bucharin's mistake was a trifle. He did not infringe any resolution of the Central Committee. Why, then, all this indignation against Bucharin? What do they really want of Bucharin? They are out for his blood! That is what comrade Zinoviev demands when, in his concluding words, he returns to the Bucharin question with so much acrimony. You want Bucharin's blood? Well, you won't get it." (Applause).

"So much for comrade Bucharin's mistake."

Belgian Group Split.

For more than a year, the development of the Belgian Opposition has been seriously held back by a serious crisis. The disputes were already distinguishable during the conflict around the Chinese Eastern railway, in connection with which the Executive Bureau adopted a position which was rejected by the International Opposition.

For some time the workers grouped around the Charleroi Federation of the Opposition demanded of the leadership "a militant Communist struggle which has not as its objective to destroy on an international scale the official Communist Parties and the Communist International, but to lead them back, under the pressure of the just criticism of the Opposition and the pressure of the revolutionary workers, to a really Communist policy by readmitting the Left Opposition into the Comintern."

They vigorously attacked the policy of the leadership and of Van Overstraeten, and fought their deviations which, by their unstable and temporizing attitude, drew the Opposition on to the path of a second Party set it up in reality against the Comintern, renounced in fact the policy of the united front with the Communist workers, abandoned the revolutionary defense of the U. S. S. R., and supported the anti-Communist "pure syndicalists". The false policy of the Executive Bureau was based on the refusal to take a genuine and clear position and the Soviet Union. One of the results of the work of redressing the International on this course was the alienation of the Executive from the workers in the ranks, the development of what was becoming a purely national base, so far as relations with the rest of the International Opposition were concerned.

This false policy led not only to stagnation but to the constant decline of the Belgian Opposition which, at the time of its foundation, grouped together the elements of a serious political development. In the eyes of the Belgian workers, it distorted the countenance of the Opposition which should appear to them as the healthiest and most active force in the Communist movement.

The open discussion between the E. B. at Brussels and the Charleroi Federation took place in the columns of the central organ, *Le Communiste*, for a number of weeks. In the discussion, it became clear that the Executive Bureau had only deepened the wrong lines in its course. In the trade union question, it adopted the false position of the "autonomists"; in the question of perspective, it proposed to drive for the constitution of a second party; in the question of the character of the Soviet State its position was very little distinguishable from that of Urbahns and the ultra-Leftists: in its attitude towards the International Opposition, it adopted the position of a very cold, distant cousin. The discussion led to the meeting of the Central Committee at Brussels, where a delegate from the International Bureau was present and supported the position adopted by the Charleroi Federation which was identical with that of the International Opposition.

It was clear during the meeting that the discussion could produce no more results. The Charleroi comrades demanded the convocation of a Congress for the entire organization to be called upon to express itself. The leaders of the E. B. opposed this alleging that the position had already been taken. This refusal consummated the rupture.

The Brussels leaders have made clear their opposition to the work of Communist redressment of the International Opposition. can only lead them, as it did to their progenitors, Urbahns and Paz, to extinction or to an anti-Communist orientation.

The Belgian Left Opposition, under the vigorous impetus of the Charleroi Federation will now be able to take up the huge tasks before it in the ranks of the Belgian workers, betrayed by the social democracy and poorly served by the small clique of Stalinists around Jacquemotte. The most active elements of the Opposition at Brussels, Gand, Verviers, Malines Anvers and Liege, will rally to its ranks. Our International Bureau has decided to support it in achieving its aims and conducting its work. The clarification of aim and perspective in Belgium will lead, as it did in France and Germany, to the advancement of the movement.