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United Front on Unemployed

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF AMERICA

Mooney's Betrayal by the Labor Bureaucrats

Two men have been in the prisons of California for some fifteen years now, as innocent of the crime for which they were convicted as any man who walks the streets. Their names are known to the working class in every part of the world. Around them, at various times, have been created movements of thousands, of hundreds of thousands and more, who have marched the streets, who have raised their voices in militant protest at their imprisonment, who have demanded in unmistakable language that the two be released immediately. Their names have become a banner of working class struggle. For "Mooney and Billings" have for more than a decade symbolized the crime of American capitalism against our class, the abyss of bourgeois class justice.

This has been known to every progressive-minded worker in the country: Mooney and Billings alone are a sufficient revelation of the cynical hypocrisy of all those who prate of "justice" for "rich as well as poor" under capitalism. Mooney and Billings were sent to prison and have been kept there only because of their activity in the labor movement and in spite of the fact that not one year has passed since their trial without new evidence being piled up to prove their guiltlessness and the fact that the whole case was a vile frame-up of the master class.

The Treachery of the Bureaucrats

But what has not been so widely known about the case is a feature of it which exceeds all others in shamelessness, duplicity and crime against labor: the treachery of the American labor leadership. The revolutionary vanguard has known of this black page in working class annals; others have felt it indistinctly but without much proof at hand; the bulk of the workers has not realized it at all. Yet the facts are there as large and real as life: from the very beginning of the historic case, the overwhelming majority of the American labor leaders have worked hand in hand with the capitalists and the capitalist politicians, not only to keep Mooney and Billings in prison, but to put them there in the first place.

Rarely has DeLeon's classic phrase, "the labor lieutenants of the capitalist class", been invested with more eloquent significance than by the whole record of the Gompers and Green school of labor chieftains in the Mooney-Billings case. The defense of the latter, at every stage of the struggle, has been confined to a small section of devoted, courageous militant workers who encountered the direct sabotage of the labor bureaucracy at every turn. How many have known of this great betrayal! Very few, we have said. And this ignorance has been caused not only by the conspiracy of the labor leaders, but to a certain extent by so many of those false "liberal friends" of the prisoners, who feared to "antagonize influential authorities". But this recedes into the background in the face of the revelations finally made in full by Tom Mooney himself and by his Defense Committee in a pamphlet just made public under the title: "Labor Leaders Betray Tom Mooney".

The Agents of the Frame-Up

It takes your breath away, this document does! As relentlessly as the judicial bloodhounds of California capital ran down Mooney and Billings, so does Mooney implacably pursue the record of misdeeds of the reactionary bureaucracy which American capital has foisted upon the labor movement. With fact heaped upon document, and document upon fact, he erects a crushing tombstone to any claims the labor skates may make to defending the interests of the working man. He marshals and parades them before our view: Paul Scharrenberg, of the California State Federation of Labor; P. H. Carthy, czar of the building trades; A. W. Brouillet, who was

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Unity of action by the working masses in the struggle for the unemployed millions requires first of all united action of the workers vanguard. The National Committee of the Communist League (the Left Opposition) is in favor of such a unity of action. As a means of bringing it about we submit to you the following analysis of the problem and a concrete program of action. We ask your serious consideration, and that of all Party members and class conscious workers, to this appeal for a common struggle.

Unemployment is increasing and with it increases the inability of the capitalist system to provide the workers with the means of existence. The number of workers who search in vain for a job mounts ever higher. This is a problem of great proportions for the American working class movement, and particularly of its revolutionary section,—the Communists.

The crisis still continues in its downward sweep. As yet there is no change in this course. Even the bourgeois economic experts are extremely cautious in their predictions. But they have with brutal frankness demanded a further reduction in the general cost of production, which means essentially further wage cuts. The capitalist owners of industry, utilize the unemployment situation to play the unemployed against the employed. They see in the situation an opportunity to force downward the standard of living of the workers in order to increase their own profits. From the standpoint of the proletariat the organization of a militant movement of resistance, uniting the widest masses of workers, stands first on the agenda.

It is not only America's involvement in world economy that has produced the present crisis. It grows, the same as any former crisis, with deadly precision out of the capitalist system of production itself. This must not be forgotten. Ever so often crisis occurs when the production cycle reaches the saturation point and the market is glutted. This is a fundamental contradiction of capitalism. In recent years rationalization and speed-up of the workers has rapidly increased the productive capacity. This only made the contradiction more acute. The result has been a great excess of means of production on the one hand, and an excess of laborers without employment and without means of existence on the other.

To present this as the final crisis of American capitalism would be false. It is still the world dominant power within a declining capitalist imperialism. It is preparing now by all possible means to climb out of its economic difficulties upon the backs of the workers of America and abroad. But so much more, in order to maintain its existence, does it need an industrial reserve army—the unemployed. This army will hence be with us as a permanent phenomenon; millions of workers condemned to remain without work and without means of existence.

There will be more crises of capitalist production. They have already become world wide in character. The ranks of the unemployed are augmented everywhere, except in Russia where capitalist unemployment has disappeared.

False Steps in the New York Dressmakers' Strike Preparations

The decision made by the leadership of the Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union to drop the economic demands in the New York dressmakers' strike, which we announced in our last issue, has been completely confirmed, and not only the fact of the change, but also the bad results which it would inevitably entail. A strike based on a struggle to improve the rotten working and wage conditions of the dressmakers would undoubtedly arouse a considerable section of the workers to follow the strike call of the union. As it is now, the announcement that it would be what amounts to a simple strike for union recognition has had the effect of a cold shower on the needle trades workers as a whole, and has served to set back the whole strike movement. Two very clear manifestations indicate this: the triumph with which the Right wing liquidators of the Lovestone camp have greeted the change in policy as a vindication of their opportunist policy, and secondly, the spiritlessness and fewness of the workers who have thus far rallied to the Industrial Union for the strike.

Unwilling or not able to meet this situation with the adoption of a correct policy of mobilizing the workers, and especially of drawing into the struggle those workers still following the Right wing union, the Industrial Union leadership is now planning to take another, even false step, which is fathered by desperation and mothered by an inherent opportunism. At the last meeting of the Trade Union Unity Council, and in the Union strike committees themselves, the old, reactionary and discredited policy of "pulling committees" for the strike is being put for adoption. In the best of cases, these pulling committees as a substitute for the response of the workers, is a sign of lack of belief in the workers themselves; in the worst case, it is a sign of the weakness of the response which the opportunists seek to make up for by coercing the majority.

Should the Left wing adopt this proposal it would undoubtedly have disastrous effects. It is the policy which the old leadership of the needle trades Left wing—Zimmerman, Wortis, Gold and Co.—made notorious. It is only a few months ago

Within the capitalist world the contradictions are thus growing and multiplying; the class struggle will increase in intensity. *There can be no solution to the unemployment problem under capitalism. The solution can be found only in the socialist revolution, and finally only on a world scale.*

In its ruthless efforts to find a way out American capitalism has embarked upon its savage campaign of slashing wages and crushing any workers' resistance. Its main fire is concentrated on the Communist vanguard. In the serious matter of correct Communist policy for the unemployment problem this outstanding feature of the moment must be given first recognition. Secondly, we must recognize the present defensive character of the general working class movement. There is not a "widespread workers radicalization", nor a "revolutionary upsurge of the American masses" at the present time. To proceed from such a fictitious analysis can lead only to fundamentally false conclusions and isolation of the Communist forces. But the situation is full of promising potentialities for a rise of the labor movement, for its entering into more active resistance and struggle for its needs. By means of a correct policy the Communist forces can connect up with this main stream they can help to prepare effectively for this new rise and give it to a positive direction.

The endeavor to keep the unemployment movement within the narrow bounds of the Trade Union Unity League is wrong. This policy hems in the movement instead of broadening it. It is false to center the unemployment program, and the activities and demonstrations, around the deceptive opportunist petition campaign to Congress. And it is doubly false to represent the Social Insurance bill as a panacea for unemployment. Such departures from Marxism only create reformist illusions. A militant struggle for real and immediate relief is indispensable, and this requires the closest unity of employed and unemployed. The slogan of "hunger marches", at a time when this unity is far from established, may tend to separate the unemployed from the employed and thus to narrow the struggle.

The net result of these errors is a situation in which the demonstrations become demonstrations only of the small Communist vanguard as an easy target for policemen's clubs while the main body of the working masses stands aside as passive bystanders. We must follow the opposite road, we must first of all endeavor to unite the working masses, with the Communist vanguard in the lead, in the struggle for the unemployed. In this struggle, those at work, suffering under the ravages and degradations of the capitalist offensive, must have their place side by side with the unemployed. Given such direction, no policemen's clubs can beat back the movement.

Our principle object is and remains the proletarian revolution. Our agitation and tactics must naturally vary to correspond with the objective developments, with the rhythms of the ebbs and flows, the upward and the downward curves of the working class movement. In each spe-

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that Johnstone and his colleagues conducted a violent sham battle against this and similar methods and labelled them the acme of Lovestoneite opportunism. Now, made desperate by the poor results of their course, they are resorting to the very same steps. When the great majority of the dressmakers remain unmoved as yet by the strike call—and that is the case now—the "pulling committees" can only result in alienating and antagonizing the workers against the Left wing movement. The proposal must be rejected forthwith by the rank and file Left wingers. The plan we proposed in our last issue, for making the struggle a real strike for the economic conditions of the workers, or failing that, to transform the strike committees into organization committees to prepare a sound basis for a struggle in the near future, must be adopted. It is not yet too late. The Johnstones, Sazers and Hyman are taking the road that ends in the discredit and weakening of the Left wing. The ranks of the movement must take the union off this road and on to the highway of victory.