

On the Illinois Miners

(The Militant publishes the following letter from comrade Gerry Allard of Illinois as a discussion article because it cannot agree with some of the statements expressed in it. We refer especially to the ambiguous remarks on working within the United Mine Workers of America, which, in its "reorganized" Fishwick section in Illinois, has become the dominant factor, embracing thousands of miners in the district in whose ranks the Left wing is obligated to work so as not to remain isolated from the masses and leave them at the mercies of the bureaucrats. The present attitude of the official Communist Party leadership means to transform into a fetish the empty shell of the Left wing union, Mine, Oil and Smelter Workers Industrial Union, which has no foothold at all in Illinois. With the remarks comrade Allard makes concerning Howat we are quite in agreement, except where he imputes to comrade Angelo the opinion that the Left wing movement must be built around Howat. The article by Angelo contained no such statement; on the contrary, it pointed out the need of the Left wing rank and file movement being built regardless of the attitude adopted by "leaders", past and present, of the miners who, consciously or not, have made themselves the instruments of the Fishwicks and Farringtons. With regard to comrade Allard, however, it should be remembered that firmness in principle should not be confined to a criticism of the Left reformists of the Howat caliber in one particular field or industry. Such firmness must be manifested especially in the fundamental questions that have divided the revolutionary movement in recent years—the very questions which are of such decisive consequence to every tactical and momentary issue that arises for our movement. Comrade Allard himself has not always manifested this firmness, particularly at the time of his capitulation from the Opposition. We are gratified to note, however, that his recent position is being developed in ever closer harmony to that of our movement.—Ed.)

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ON ANGELO'S ARTICLE

The situation in the coal mining industry in recent months has steadily become worse. As in all basic industries, in searching for a clear policy to meet the deplorable situation, the Illinois district holds the limelight with various important events in the last year. The National Miners Union, the Fishwick-Lewis fight, the rank and file movement, occasional glimpses of the I. W. W.—all these present to the coal miners factors of tremendous importance in the way of education. The arena presents various political groups in practical struggles, where workers may deduce their various aims, tactics, policies, etc., as well as reveal the soundness or weakness, the good and bad points. As a whole, it gives one a real sizing-up of the various tendencies, from the reformist to the ultra-Leftist revolutionist, in action.

To the militant workers, the reactionary Fishwick and Lewis groups which control the remnants of the U. M. W. of A., are proved traitors, agents of the bosses and the first lieutenants of capital in stifling real working class action. There cannot under any circumstances be any excuse for the colossal betrayals of these fakers through hard years of struggle on the part of the rank and file.

Comrade Angelo, in his recent article on the Illinois situation apologizes in an open way for Howat. Although Howat's record has many high spots of sacrifice and courage in facing the enemies of the coal miners, yet his record is spotted with numerous political confusions, weaknesses and discouragement in facing various tendencies on political issues. The actions of Howat in the last four years prove beyond much doubt his weakening, yes, and even opportunistic motives. Howat to my knowledge has proved beyond a doubt his disqualification to become a national leader of the coal miners. He does not possess the makings of a general in the class struggle. Would I be permitted to ask comrade Angelo these questions?

On Howat

1. Was Howat elected by bona fide rank and file delegates at the Springfield "reorganization" convention, or was he elected by Fishwick and Farrington?
2. Do you agree with Howat's statement to John L. Lewis' executive board wherein he promises not to embarrass the administration if it permits him to return to the U. M. W. of A.?
3. Has Howat ever voiced publicly his opposition to a stolen agreement between the miners and operators which is today

imposing the rottenest conditions ever imagined by a so-called 100 percent organized district?

4. Has Howat ever publicly denounced Fishwick, Nesbit, Walker and the gunman district board of the "reorganized" movement?

Comrade Angelo and the militant labor movement waste their time if they focus their destiny on the actions of an individual. Instead of making Howat "the tail end", there is a danger of making the principles of our movement the tail end of Howat. This is absolutely in contradiction to Leninism, on which the Opposition is firmly based. Comrade Angelo greatly exaggerates the so-called "respect and confidence of the rank and file". In Southern Illinois, Howat is placed by the rank and file in the same category with Lewis, Fishwick, et al.

The "educational groups" referred to in comrade Angelo's article receive a high consideration. Whether these "educational groups" are so organized as to legalize themselves in the face of the U. M. W. of A. constitution, I do not know. However, the outline of Angelo's plan of work is inadequate. Not to neglect the rank and file miners in the U. M. W. of A. is an important thing. But to rely solely on boring from within the U. M. W. of A. is just as bad as neglecting the miners in these reformist organizations and isolating ourselves in sectarian "dual" unions.

The main point of our struggle must be to win over the majority of the coal miners to our cause. To rely mainly on capturing the degenerated, corrupted, dying U. M. W. of A. is futile. The numerical inferiority of the U. M. W. of A. from a national standpoint places us in a position where other steps must be taken. If we can organize the masses of unorganized miners into the U. M. W. of A. we can organize the masses of unorganized miners into the U. M. W. of A. we can organize real industrial unions. Why ultimately take over the U. M. W. of A. and hinder our prestige and retard progress?

The absence of a real functioning Communist party in Illinois coal fields, after years of great influence and energetic work, presents a calamity to the revolutionary movement. The best example of the weakness of our party is the fact that in Franklin County, the largest coal producing section, Freeman Thompson, president of the M. O. S. W. I. U., polled only 24 votes running for Senator on the C. P. ticket. True, the results of capitalist vote-counters are not our barometers for gauging the degree of class-consciousness, nevertheless, the complete collapse of the party apparatus and the non-functioning of a single union local is a clear-cut example of weakness in a county where over 400 party members once belonged and a year ago, some 5,000 members were enlisted into the National Miners Union.

These facts must not be received sarcastically by the militant workers. It means a weakening of our fight in the face of severe complications in the capitalist machinery. Thousands of miners are hungry, millions of workers starve. Capitalism faces serious opposition on a world-wide scale. We must redouble our efforts, we must drive the message home, we must put our party on the right track.

—GERRY ALLARD.

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The Weisman Case

From the *Organizer*, the weekly bulletin of the New York Party district, we learn the following in the section devoted to the Control Commission decision: "That comrade Weisman acted in a most bureaucratic manner in general; that specifically he, just before his leaving [as self-appointed delegate to the Proletarian Congress.—ed.], set up a secretariat without consulting the leading union committee, and also has kept himself aloof from the membership of the union [the Food Workers Industrial Union]; and that his personal conduct as to indulgence in alcoholics . . . (etc.) has injured the prestige of the party and the union in the eyes of the workers." In addition, the District Control Commission "investigated also rumors about financial irregularities and about personal conduct" and found that "comrade Weisman went to the R. I. L. U. Congress with the knowledge and permission of the party, but that he pursued various maneuvers [so!] towards this end; that the finances of the union have been handled in a most irresponsible manner due to which the union finds itself in a bad financial condition." The final decision on Weisman, it continues, severely censures him, removes him from all posts and committees, and prohibits his holding office for a year.

Insignificant an individual though Weisman is and has been, the case is nevertheless not without instructive features. It is an almost classic instance of the internal régime of the party and the organizations it controls, and the disastrous consequences of this régime. How would it be possible, given a normal functioning of the party and the Left wing union, for an individual under party and union control to manipulate finances in a shady manner, that he retain a post while conducting himself in a manner that destroys the prestige of the party, to act generally in a bureaucratic manner, virtually to appoint himself the representative of the workers to international congresses, etc., and yet retain his post as leader of the union, as Weisman did? The answer is simply this: with a normal functioning, this situation would be impossible, or at the very least, most improbable. It has happened, does happen and will happen precisely because there is an abnormal, bureaucratic, irresponsible régime

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Mooney's Betrayal

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finally run out of the leadership of the 'Frisco Labor Council for his treachery; the camarilla of the Teamsters' Unions: Michael Casey, James Wilson, William Conboy, Walter Dryer and Co.; and from them to the national hierarchy, the Greens and Wolls, he takes us in the final step.

"They are scabs at heart," H. L. Mencken wrote to Mooney once; and the latter adds: "They are scabs in action." Mooney's jailers, those who framed him, received the constant support of these labor leaders; Mooney's defenders received their constant fire. The sentiment of the mass of American labor was deliberately ignored by labor fakery, and all activities in the defendants' behalf undermined, because Mooney and Billings had been "trouble-makers", "agitators" and "Reds" in the trade unions—and a thorn in the side of the businessmen. "Why, if you let his kind go about", John O'Connell, secretary of the 'Frisco Labor Council and chum of the Chamber of Commerce president, declared at one time, "no one would be safe . . . there is only one thing to do—to put him away for life—where he can't do any harm." This has been the attitude of nine out of ten of the A. F. of L. leaders, from O'Connell up to Green!

That is why Mooney is a hundred times right when he says in his letter to his fellow-prisoner, Billings: "Our struggle for freedom is inextricably bound up with the whole question of the future of the American workers. Our victory will be a guarantee that they too must win if there is a leadership capable of strengthening the A. F. of L., and not keeping it stagnant or weakening it. Out of the present leadership, which is thoroughly corrupted, no fundamental progress can be expected . . . Those lieutenants of capital masquerading as labor leaders should be exposed; they are the worst enemies of a real organized labor movement. It is our duty to help expose their culpability. They are our worst foes. They are the foes of all militant workers."

A hundred times right: For the battle to liberate Mooney and Billings is not, as their liberal "friends" believe, a fight to vindicate "American justice", but a class struggle against "American justice" and its beneficiaries, the capitalist class and its labor agents. Each one of the latter run out of the labor movement means another bar wrenched, out of the sockets of the prisoners' cells; every new fortification of the Left wing in the working class is another stone crushed in the walls of the penitentiary.

The latest declaration of Mooney, following upon the recent Supreme Court decision, is an invaluable document. It was tardy in publication, because what it says held true from the very beginning, and its expression would surely have advanced the cause of the frame-up victims to greater success than it has hitherto attained. But it is not too late. The workers' movement in this country has also been tardy, in letting two of its best sons rot in prison for fifteen years without compelling their release. But that also is not irremediable, it is not yet too late to act.

With this new turn in its struggle as a point of new departure, to which added weight is being given daily by new arrests of militant workers, new imprisonments, the burning need of the moment is a broad, national defense movement to free all the class war prisoners, a movement that must break down the treacherous barriers of the labor bureaucracy, that must reach into every labor organization, to the workers in every city and town, until it has gathered such power and momentum that it can break through the walls that hold our class war fighters. The initiative and spirit must necessarily be furnished principally by the Left wing and Communist forces. They are under command and obligation. With intelligent boldness, a power can be created in the labor movement reaching beyond the confines of the struggle for the class war prisoners, and accomplishing successes of gigantic dimensions.

The International Labor Defense, which remains the only militant workers' defense organization on a national and international scale, must set about its task immediately. It can and will be done, but the prerequisite for success is to throw overboard the disastrously sectarian chart by which the ship of the Left wing is now being steered. That in turn is the task of the more conscious and farsighted militants. They must proceed to solve this task so that Mooney, Billings, McNamara, the Centralia boys, the dozens upon dozens of Communists and their prisoners of our class are liberated. Our aid is pledged in advance.—M. S.

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