

EDITORIAL NOTES

HOW THE MINERS WERE DEFEATED

The article of Gerry Allard in the last number of the *Militant* paints a picture of catastrophe in the Illinois mine fields, the old-time seat of labor militancy and the stronghold of Communism. His remarks on the situation have a value, but that value, unfortunately, is a purely negative one. They are an excellent example of how not to solve the problems of Communism. For that reason, and that only, they deserved publication in our paper.

The Left wing for years was a power in Southern Illinois, based on mass support of the militant miners. The "Save the Union" movement under Left wing leadership challenged all the fakers for supremacy. The coal towns and camps were dotted with thriving locals of the Communist party—the surest sign of a conscious movement. But as has been told before, and as comrade Allard's article points out again, this whole movement has slipped away. The mighty revolt of the miners has been broken for the time being. The rebels have been corralled again by the labor fakers with the help of Howat and other so-called progressives.

And with it there is "the complete collapse of the Party apparatus" and "the non-functioning of a single local union [of the Left wing miners' union]". In the recent elections the party candidate for senator "polled only 24 votes" in Franklin County where we once had "over 400 party members"! So says comrade Allard, and he ought to know because he is on the spot. He cites these facts as "a clear cut example of weakness." Weakness indeed! Better to say an example of catastrophic defeat. And better yet to ask what are the real causes of it. Instead of that comrade Allard muddles the issue further by arguments over secondary questions.

For the results in the Illinois mine fields there is a chain of causes, one linked to another. Fishwick and Farrington, the direct agents of the mine owners, were sufficiently discredited. They could not recapture the revolting miners by themselves. For this they needed Howat and other pseudo-radicals. This explains the necessary prominence, as decorations, of these elements in the Fishwick union.

But Howat and the other "progressives" in turn could not harness the miners again to the chariot of the mine bosses, driven by Fishwick and Farrington, by their own efforts alone. In order to accomplish this they needed the disruption of the workers' vanguard—the party. The policy of Foster accomplished this for them from within. The policy concocted to fit the exigencies of the spurious "third period", was criminally false. The course of expelling and blackguarding the most reliable Communist militants was absolutely reactionary. By these means Stalinism disorganized the vanguard and prepared the way for the betrayal of the "progressives" and the victory of the reactionaries and the bosses. Foster helped Howat no less than Howat helped Fishwick and the mine owners.

The Communist miners will not be able to take a single step forward out of this blind alley of defeat until they understand its whole chain of causes and their connection with each other. Comrade Allard bears a direct responsibility for the present sad state of affairs. At a critical moment of the fight he deserted the banner of the Opposition and capitulated to the Centrist bureaucrats who were organizing the defeat of the vanguard from within. It is quite necessary to expose the rôle of Howat. The function of "progressivism" as a come-on for reaction is graphically illustrated by the Illinois experience. Even the Opposition, which suffered very little from illusions on this score, can learn something from this example. But we cannot allow a discussion of this factor in the defeat to cover up an even more decisive one—the disarming of the workers' vanguard by the bureaucrats of Centrism.

An emphasis on this side of the question is doubly necessary when comrade Allard is speaking. This is the first and most important lesson of the Illinois defeat. When comrade Allard begins to explain this to the miners we can begin to have some confidence that he will be able to serve the interests of the party and the working class again and to make good some of the great harm he has done. As long as he avoids this question he puts a chasm between himself and the principled policy of the Opposition. We are not in the least interested in self-humiliating "confessions" according to the Stalin ritual. We only want the

questions put straight and the lessons clearly drawn.

Not the least of the crimes of Lovestone and Foster was their poisoning the movement with diplomacy. This diplomacy, this muddling, hiding, twisting and obscuring the principle questions, is not a proletarian but a bourgeois method. Let us have none of it in the Communist League.

MILLER GOES OVER TO MUSTE

When a man bites a dog—that's news, said Dana; and on the same principle that the unusual is always interesting, when a man goes so far to the Right that he gets expelled from the Lovestone faction, the incident deserves a little notice. Such it seems is the fate—or the fortune, if you prefer—of the well-known Bert Miller and a half dozen or so others who have pooled their intellects in order to produce one great thought. The thought is that the way to serve the cause of Communism in America is to join the Muste organization (the C. P. L. A.) without further parley and to accept its platform. So much we learn from the last issue of the *Revolutionary Age* in which Ben Gitlow reads Miller out of Lovestone's organization for the preservation of Leninism as Lenin never knew it.

This matter has been a topic of conversation on Fourteenth Street for quite a while and the facts were well known before the item appeared in the paper. There are people who, on the grounds of fair play, sympathize with Miller and consider his expulsion a frame-up, or at least a miscarriage of justice. Crime, say these exponents of the Rights of Man, is qualitative not quantitative. If a man is not put in jail for stealing a nickel why should he be arrested for taking a dime? If one is not penalized for mistaking Lovestoneism for Communism, he should not be condemned for making the same error in regard to Musteism. It is only, they say on Fourteenth Street, a question of degree.

Miller's mistake however, from the Lovestoneist standpoint, is a mistake of tactics. He wants to walk directly to the point of objective instead of circling around to it. In this he violates the traditions of the Lovestone faction; and, moreover, he spoils the strategy. The Right wing movement, it is true, is a break with Communism and a new bridge to social democracy. But there are some Communist workers in the Right wing camp—driven there by the crimes and absurdities of the party leadership—who do not know this yet. They have to be prepared and maneuvered step by step. Lovestone understands this and leads his movement accordingly.

Miller, who is different only because he is dumber, doesn't understand it. He wants to go too fast. Therefore he had to be pushed out and the gate was slammed behind him with a loud and virtuous bang. "He is breaking with Communism", cries Gitlow with crocodile tears in his voice. But the case is not really so bad for Miller and he need have no fear of a permanent separation. The whole character of the propaganda and activity of the Right wing is an assurance that they will catch up with and rejoin him after a while.

Miller, the recruit of Musteism, which is nothing but a wing of social democracy, served his novitiate in the war against counter-revolutionary Trotskyism. As the

District Organizer in New York, he put his whole little heart into that crusade. He was the organizer of the slugging squads which attacked our comrades on the street and broke up the meetings at the Labor Temple. Now already, and quite logically, he has developed further the implications of that struggle. This is all true to form. The campaign against the Left Opposition was for him, as it has been for many throughout the world, the starting point and the transition stage for a transfer of class allegiance.

The fight against the Left Opposition has been the training school for treason to Communism. Bessedovsky fought Trotskyism valiantly. He was rewarded with Rakovsky's post as ambassador to France, and then he jumped over the fence of the embassy into the arms of the white guards. Agabekov, a tried warrior against Trotskyism, took the place of the murdered Blumkin shortly before he passed over to the camp of the class enemy. The bottoms of many a soldier in the war against the Left Opposition throughout the world are already firmly wedged into the functionary chairs of social democracy.

Tell us, tell us, Communist workers, why do so many Trotsky-killers turn out to be social democrats and white guards?

TRIFLING WITH THE NEGRO QUESTION

In its struggle against the workers' emancipation movement capitalism plays upon all the dark sentiments of ignorance, prejudice and superstition. This is seen daily and hourly in its endeavors to divide the workers and oppressed people along national, radical and religious lines. The very air we breathe is saturated with these prejudices which arise from class society like foul odors from decaying matter. The revolutionary struggle for the solidarity of labor is also a struggle for knowledge and light on these questions.

These problems have a particular importance and acuteness in America where the proletariat, enslaved by bourgeois ideology, is inflamed against the foreigner, the Jew and the Negro. Communism cannot be other than the mortal enemy of these devastating prejudices, and the Communist party is charged with an irreconcilable

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struggle against them. In no small degree the party of the proletariat is to be judged by the vigor, and also by the wisdom, with which it conducts this struggle. And it is self-evident that the Negro question takes first place within it. Communist ideas, Communist teaching and practice must break down the artificial wall which bourgeois prejudice has reared between the races; the Communists must be the heralds of a genuine solidarity between the exploited workers of the white race and the doubly exploited Negroes.

This is no question to be played with. Its seriousness and its difficulty are enormous. The deep-seated prejudices of the white workers will not be extirpated by force or terror any more than the justified suspicions of the Negroes will be removed by cajolery. In this field education takes the first place—patient, unceasing and systematic explanation combined with a genuine policy of equality in practice. Such a policy must be as free from discrimination on the one hand as it is free from flattery and demagoguery on the other. Only along this path will real progress be recorded.

During their career as leaders of the party, Lovestone, Minor & Co., did their best to spoil this work, as they did others. For discrimination against the Negroes—the instinctive attitude of all petty-bourgeois elements, but an attitude formally impossible in the name of Communism—they substituted an unscrupulous demagoguery, and a policy of flattery, condescension and bribery of Negro intellectuals and careerists on the make. By this they attracted not a few outright scoundrels and adventurers while they repelled the self-reliant type of proletarian militants of the Negro race—the type which is offended, and justly so, no less by discrimination than by its twin, condescension. Thereby they arrested the real work among the Negroes and transformed the whole question into a factional football.

The Foster leaders, who have set for themselves the historic task of matching the Lovestone régime in unworthy demagoguery and combining it with a stupidity all their own, are now having their fling at the Negro question—and at the Negro. They seem to labor always under a psychological fixation that their time is short and that what they do must be done quickly. The eradication of racial antagonisms, like the creation of a new trade union movement, is a small task for these high-pressure people; a task to be accomplished between plenums, by command. Prejudice against the Negro, that ugly poison which has been injected into the veins of the white workers, is to be removed at one stroke.

The *Daily Worker* of February 24 features the announcement of this major operation. Comrade Yokinen, a member of the party in Harlem, is accused of manifesting a prejudicial attitude toward Negro workers. One might think—if this is really the case and not a frame-up as we knew of in the days of the Lovestone leadership—that the incident could be made the occasion for an education of the party on the concrete case. Education however, particularly on such a question, requires a calm atmosphere; an atmosphere free from demagoguery, hypocrisy and incitement; an atmosphere created by teachers of the proletariat, not by terrorizers.

But such methods are alien to the blustering vulgarities who feel the need to shout down their own prejudices of yesterday. They are going to summon the offending comrade to a mass trial! "This trial", they announce, "must be packed with Negro and white workers." Workers' organizations are asked to send delegations to the sport. The mass trial, they say further, "will be the forerunner of similar trials all over the country." And all this is to be done "so that the Negro workers will know that the Communist party is in deadly earnest in its fight for the Negro masses." Otherwise they would not know.

Just a moment, gentlemen! Aren't you insulting the intelligence of the Negro masses just a little? Aren't you stultifying the party with this stupid campaign of terror? If you have been educating the party properly how does it happen that race prejudice among party members is manifested "all over the country"? For the Negro masses radical persecution is a bitter actuality that confronts them every moment of their lives. They have learned to recognize all forms of this reactionary poison, including that form of so-called freedom from it which protests too much. Take care, triflers, lest your indecent demagoguery becomes a boomerang for the party. Take care lest the Negro masses ask: If your own conscience is clear, why do you shout so loud?

—J. P. C.