

# THE MILITANT

Published Twice a Month by the Communist League of America (Opposition)

VOL. IV, No. 6 (Whole No. 65)

NEW YORK, MARCH 15, 1931

PRICE 5 CENTS

## In Prison..

### A Letter from Exile

I have already written you that one of the "jailors" of L. S. Sosnovsky in Tomsk prison was arrested for having transmitted letters from comrade Sosnovsky to our friends. This fact is now precisely verified. The prison employee who transmitted the material of L. S. Sosnovsky to the outside, was arrested and then shot by the G. P. U. I guarantee the veracity of this news.

Uncertainty and disorder prevail in the G. P. U., as everywhere else. The distrust of everybody and everything is incredible. For the least suspicion, often based on nothing, for example, for a polite attitude towards the Oppositionist prisoners, or for an "indulgent" raid, etc., the G. P. U. workers are dismissed. For the slightest negligence, there are arrests. For any support or assistance to the Opposition, a shooting takes place so as to terrorize the others.

It must also be said that the distrust of the head of the G. P. U., even of its own collaborators, is very comprehensible. During the raids in deportation and even in prison, we often run into semi-sympathizers among the agents of the G. P. U. Of course, they do not show themselves openly, but they carry out their dirty-work, as far as we are concerned, with disgust. There have often been instances where raids have been made among us in such a way that nothing is found.

Among the arrested Oppositionists, comrade Philip Schwalbe is under the harshest conditions. It is now almost ten months that he has been in the internal prison of the G. P. U., and that he is literally wasted by tuberculosis (he loses blood in great quantity). His two brothers are arrested with him. No communication is permitted with him and absolutely nothing is known about him. He is being held in the most savage isolation. Comrade Philip Schwalbe (former secretary to Kamenev) is accused by the G. P. U. of having transmitted to the Left Opposition the report of the famous interview between Kamenev and Bucharin.

Besides the Schwalbe brothers, 12 Oppositionists are incarcerated—students of the Jugo-Slav section of the Communist University of the Western Peoples.

The great poverty of skilled workers, especially in the distant provinces, sometimes (it is the exception) compels the giving of work to deported Oppositionists (to workers of high skill) in some economic institution or another. But there too, it does not happen without petty meanness. For instance, the Oppositionist workers are deprived of the right . . . to eat in the restaurant of the enterprise where they work. Those are the methods by which one is obliged to defend the "general line."

H. M. Sjermuks, the former secretary to comrade Trotsky, has been deported for three years now to be city of Cherepvt. He is deprived of all work. —H. H.

**PARIS COMMUNE**

Hold Open  
Saturday, March 21, 1931  
FOR THE PARIS COMMUNE  
CELEBRATION  
organized by the  
New York Branch, Communist  
League of America (Opposition)  
at the  
HUNGARIAN HALL, 323 East 79th Street  
A Prominent Band Will Furnish Music  
Admission 50c 60c at the Door

## «Progressives» Meet

### Middle Class Impotence Can't Solve the Burning Problems of Labor

Following a session of Congress which failed to contribute one iota to solving the problems ravaging the economic life of the country and inflicting indescribable misery upon the working class—a Congress which not only marked the stark reaction of the Hoover administration but also the impotence of the "progressive group" in the Senate—the latter summoned a conference in Washington where the flower of American middle class liberal thought gathered to express themselves on the problems that Hoover's Congress failed to solve.

What attitude did the Progressive Conference assume towards that section of the population upon whom practically the whole burden of the deep-going crisis has fallen: the workers? That is the test of any political group in the country, especially now. And it is precisely on this point that the "progressive" leaders demonstrated their incapacity to rise above their source, their bloodless impotence, their inherent inability to break from the class of big business and big finance, behind which they are constantly trailing.

Norris, LaFollette jr., and the small group of Senators and Representatives that follows their leadership, are the representatives of the largest petty bourgeoisie in the world. The futile aspirations of the farmer squeezed by finance capital, and the urban middle class, are reflected in all the principal actions of the progressives. For years, since the days of the activity of the elder LaFollette and even before that, the

middle class progressives in both of the old parties have followed a more or less common course, attempting in vain to steer between the representatives of finance capital who control Congress, and the interests of the only historically progressive class—the working class. The fight "against the trusts" conducted by a declining middle class—a fight doomed from its inception—was no less hopeless than the fight the middle class, raked from all sides by the fire of the crisis, is now conducting to save its social and economic position in highly centralized American capitalist society. For the big bourgeoisie seeks to issue from its crisis not only at the expense of lowering the standard of living of the working class, but of further assaults upon the middle class as well.

Torn between the fear of finance capital on the one hand, and the working class on the other, the representatives of the middle class—and those spurious "labor" leaders like Sidney Hillman and William Green do not fall entirely outside of that category—convened and accomplished absolutely nothing. The mildness in attitude towards Hoover expressed in the resolution adopted created surprise even in the capitalist press. Outside of an empty criticism of the administration for failing to act upon the unemployment problem, the progressives themselves advanced no program that the working class might rely upon to relieve it in these times of wretchedness and misery. The problem of relations with the

Soviet Union was officially tabooed by the conference, and the only mention of it was made by the faithful servant of capital, William Green, who spoke with the voice of reaction against the workers' republic. And this at a time when the recognition of Russia and the extension of long-term credits that would enable it to purchase machinery here would aid considerably in ameliorating the position of the unemployed.

Fear to act, inability to act; windy protest and political impotence—these are the characteristics with which the Washington conference was fatally invested in advance by the very nature of its sponsors and the interests they represent. No more striking symbol of middle class futility could be given than the transfer of "leadership" from Norris to the younger LaFollette, accompanied by the wistful regret that he would not live to see the sun rise above the mountain. The American petty bourgeoisie will never see the sun rise for it. Here, as everywhere else, it is incapable of playing a leading rôle in society. Its fear of falling into the ranks of the proletariat it despises drives it at every crucial moment to seek shelter under the wing of big capital. It is powerless to defend itself, it is infinitely less capable of defending the class interests of the proletariat. To free itself from the mental enslavement to the decrepit middle class leaders, and from the petty bourgeois labor leaders, is the first pre-requisite to independence and victory for the working class.

## Anti-Communist Repression Spreads Throughout the Country

### I.L.D. Refuses to Aid Philly Defendants

PHILADELPHIA.—

The habeas corpus action for the release of comrades Leon Goodman and Bernard Morgenstern, members of the Communist League of America (Opposition) arrested on International Unemployment Day for distributing our leaflets, and held for sedition, was argued on Friday afternoon, and the judge took the matter under consideration, asking both sides to file briefs. As soon as the proceedings were finished, Morgenstern was bailed out, and with Goodman already out, this automatically terminates the H. C. proceedings. It is now a clear-cut matter that they are out on bail awaiting trial for sedition and distributing seditious literature. Trial will take place within the next two months.

We attended the Anti-Sedition Conference of the International Labor Defense today. It was, as usual, a party affair with delegates from only their shadow organizations present. There were, however, perhaps a score of workers present who were not delegates. About 60 to 70 present in all.

Engdahl made the usual speech about a mass struggle and outlined a campaign of activities for collecting signatures for petitions to repeal the Flynn Sedition Act.

The Local organizer of the I. L. D., (Ross) who had told comrade Goodman that he would take up the matter of the arrests, had evidently "taken it up", because in his speech he carefully ignored our case. After his speech, the floor was thrown open and I was given five minutes. I called the attention of those present to the fact that while Ross had known of the arrests, he had ignored them. I pointed out that they had been arrested while distributing leaflets, and also a notice to workers to attend the demonstration of the party at the City Hall Plaza on February 25. I pointed out that Engdahl had said that the bosses had a united front, and I urged that the workers form as broad a one as possible. I asked them not to let factionalism obscure the fact that a conviction of Morgenstern and Goodman meant a blow to them also. I concluded by asking that they help us, and that they permit us to cooperate with them.

Of course, when I had finished, a party member took the floor and said the usual tripe.

All this was lost on the loyalists. They have no function other than to raise their hands, we know, but it did have considerable effect upon newer and less fractional elements. One young fellow, seemingly native American (we don't know him) took the floor and said political differences should not govern in this matter: that the I. L. D. not being a political organization, should not make that the basis for discrimination. He wanted a committee to be elected to investigate our status, and if we were genuine workers, that we be seated and not excluded because of our political differences. Another asked that the matter be not closed but that more discussion be given to it. Several wanted the floor, seemingly not satisfied with the exclusion, but the motion was finally railroaded through.

In spite of the deliberate sabotage of this obligation to defend workers picked out by capitalist class justice, our comrades intend proceeding with the work of setting in motion a united front movement to fight against the indictment and against the Sedition Act which is aimed at the militant labor movement as a whole.

—K. M. WHITTEN.

The national office of the Communist League has written to J. Louis Engdahl, secretary of the I. L. D., on this matter, pointing out the significance of the Philadelphia arrests and requesting the intervention of the I. L. D. in accordance with the later's expressed policy of defending all workers regardless of political or economic viewpoints. Up to this writing, no reply has been received. And that is not entirely surprising. The bureaucrats in charge of the I. L. D. are more interested in the maintenance of their factional solidarity than in defending a "Trotskyist" worker. Their attitude appears to be that the "Trotskyists" may rot in jail for committing the crime of questioning the correctness of the course pursued in the Communist movement by the Fosters, Stachels, Engdahls and other agents of the Stalinist apparatus. No more criminal attitude than this can be imagined. We expect little better from these sold souls. But what do the workers in the I. L. D., to whom the class struggle is not a faction football, say to this procedure?

### Police Raid Minneapolis Opposition Forum

Following a sharp encounter between unemployed workers and the police which took place in Minneapolis on International Unemployment Day (February 25), occasioned by the attempts of the workers rendered desperate by their state of misery to seize food at one of the well-known city's markets, the police have launched a violent campaign of suppression against the revolutionary movement. The citadel of Farmer-Labor party reformism in the North-west is now the scene of an anti-Red hysteria reminiscent of the Palmer days in 1919-1920. Stricken with fear at the militancy of the hungry and jobless workers who are getting fed up by the capitalist politicians and their empty promises, a concerted attempt is being made to drive the whole Communist movement underground so as to cut down its effectiveness in fighting for the needs of the workers.

Vincent Dunne, Twin Cities Opposition leader, writes us:

"We are having quite stirring and eventful times here. The Communist party is underground to all intents and purposes. The Communist League is also sharply affected. Our last open forum was broken up by an army of police and our hall closed. We will of course make an issue of it and put up a fight. The League, because of its basis in the unions, is in much better shape as to mass contact than the party. We have succeeded in having a resolution of protest (covering the whole business of police suppression of workers' meetings) passed by the Organization Committee of the union movement. A fight will be made in the Central Labor Union for further agitation".

The attack on the Communists is an attack upon the vanguard of the labor movement. Through it, the capitalists seek to sever the head from the shoulders of the working class. While the reformists plead for a crumb to the starving workers so as to lull them into passivity, the Communists are fighting for the relief of the workers driven into poverty and suffering. The capitalists recognize this keenly enough. They are assailing the working class as a whole through the assault upon the vanguard. The workers must present a solid front against the reaction.