

Dressmaker Strike Ends

On March 18, the *Daily Worker* published a brief official announcement that the New York dressmakers' strike called by the Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union had been called off. As has become the custom in recent years with the incompetents foisted upon the Left wing movement, the statement makes no serious endeavor to sum up the results of the strike or to draw any intelligent conclusions from it. We have come to expect this light-hearted procedure which distinguishes the irresponsible and bureaucratic opportunists. The statement does say, however, that "the big general strike committee will be transformed into an organization committee to spread the Industrial Union throughout the industry". A more pitiful instance of bankruptcy in leadership and policy than this—so characteristic of the whole strike move—can scarcely be imagined. By its shame-faced silence, the statement tells an eloquent story of defeat and the policy of the party and union leadership which was calculated to guarantee this defeat in advance.

Prior to the actual calling of the strike, the leadership of the Industrial Union adopted a position which was calculated to rob the strike of its immediate interest and concern to the workers—hours, wages, conditions—the party leadership of the Union proceeded to drop all these demands. It virtually confined the strike to the demand for "recognition of the Union". In other words, the strike was to be conducted along precisely those lines of business-agent unionism which Johnstone, Foster, Potash and Company had so virtuously condemned as corrupt "Lovesoneism" in their "exposures" of almost a year ago.

As soon as this thoroughly false plan was adopted, the Left Opposition, through the columns of the *Militant*, declared:

"If it is proposed to call a strike merely for 'recognition'—the strike will be devoid of its real objective, for which the party bureaucrats will bear the full responsibility. Rather than such a 'strike' we propose that the present strike committee be transformed into an ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITTEE with a campaign worked out to lay the ground solidly for a real strike in the future. These are the proposals which the Left wing as a whole must adopt." (*Militant*, No. 62.)

Unfortunately, these proposals of the Opposition were not adopted. Ill-prepared in general, its organization weakened, the membership robbed of their natural enthusiasm by a previous destructive course, and, on top of that, the devitalizing of the strike demands, the Union entered the strike with the odds heavily against it. For the results, as we declared, the "party bureaucrats bear the full responsibility".

It is hardly necessary to elaborate here upon the vain misrepresentation and journalistic sensationalism of the official party press during the strike. The policy of lying about successes that are non-existent, about victories that are defeats, about gains that are losses, has progressively deprived the Stalinist press of any standing for truth in the eyes of the advanced workers. Certain it is that the bulk of the needle trades workers were not deceived by the boastful headlines and stories in the *Daily Worker* and *Freiheit* which announced "new shops" and "new thousands of workers" on strike every day. The needle trades workers—if nobody else—knew quite well that the strike, carried on as it was, brought out not the 8,000-10,000 "estimated" by the party press, but rather between 2,000-3,000 workers. No dressmakers' strike could be conducted in New York today with so feeble a response.

The situation would undoubtedly have been a much happier one had the party and the Union, which is under its leadership, pursued a policy that would draw closer to the Left wing the thousands of workers organized by the Right wing union and the even greater thousands of workers who are outside of either union. But the recent past, in which the arch-stupid theory of "social fascism" prevailed—the theory which puts every worker outside of the party and Left wing into the camp of fascism—could not pass by without inflicting the greatest punishment upon the Left wing and serving as grist to the mill of the labor lieutenants of capitalism.

The payment which the Left wing had to make for the obstinate comedy of errors of the Stalinists has been the alienation of the non-Communist workers. And the payment has not yet been made in full.

The party leaders have not acknowledged the strike results for what they are: a defeat, a new blow at the Left wing. Without such a recognition, the past will be repeated, that is, no progress at all will be made. We can easily understand why the Fosters, Stachels, Amters and brethren are averse to undertaking a serious review of the strike policy, and even more, of the whole policy of the party, particu-

larly in the trade union field: the result of such an investigation could only be murderous for them and their positions. But that is precisely why the Left wing and Communist workers as a whole must undertake such an examination.

But such a review is "legally prohibited" by Stalinism. At the party fraction, following the strike, Phil Aronberg proposed an elaborate discussion of the whole affair, with the provision that everybody present should be given the opportunity to criticize any and all features of the strike policy. Naturally, such a proposal found an immediate echo among the comrades, for it could only produce fruitful results. But they reckoned without their host, this time in the person of Amter, the party district organizer, who put the bureaucratic heel down upon the suggestion by announcing that there was no need for such a discussion because the "comrades have faith in their leadership and its policies." After such an arbitrary and contemptible ruling, there was, of course, no discussion. Even Aronberg refused to take the floor. And the results of this failure to adopt the proposals of the Opposition for the strike, and our proposals for an open and honest discussion in the party? The results are a greater passivity among the Left wing workers, discouragement, cynicism,—and the loss of numerical support and prestige for the Left wing as a whole.

The discussion which the Amters fear and prohibit must nevertheless be conducted, for the life of the movement is involved. If it is not done within strictly party channels, it must be done elsewhere. The *Militant* will serve as a forum. We shall therefore return to this question in the coming issue.—S. J.

The Agrarian Congress in Puebla

A state agrarian congress was held in Puebla, Mexico, from February 1st to 4th. The whole affair was very carefully organized by those sponsoring it and its petty bourgeois character was clearly distinguishable from the first speech to the last.

Governor Leonidas Andreu Almazan, governor of the state of Puebla, presided at the opening session, and numerous other bourgeois politicians were present including Governor Adalberto Tejeda of Vera Cruz, the governor of Guanajuato, representatives of the governors of the states of Yucatan, San Luis Potosi and Tlaxcala, and a host of senators, deputies and petty politicians of all colors from the "pink revolutionists" to the blackest reactionaries. The national anthem was sung by the 1,500 delegations present and every one received food and lodging during the period of the congress at the expense of Governor Almazan. In short, for those of us who have a bit of a memory, it appears to have been very similar to any number of former Mexican agrarian congresses, in which during the "Kuo Min Tang" period of the Mexican movement, the Communist party collaborated with Tejeda, Portes Gil and others, in the "organization of the peasantry".

In the Puebla congress, the closest collaboration was to be noted between the "Left" petty bourgeois politicians (Tejeda, Almazan, Cedilla) and all of the closest henchmen of the late Galvan, our party's kulak "Communist" leader of former times. Among the "Galvanites" present in the rôle of collaborators of Almazan, Tepeda and Co. were Carolino Anaya, Isaac Fernandez, Juan Jacobo Torres, Vargas Rea, Enrique Flores Magon (Martinez) and Celso Cepeda. Another "Galvanite", Julio Cuadros, was elected president of the congress. Also present, having already definitely abandoned the ranks of Communism, were several ex-Right wingers of the Mexican Communist Party including German List Arizubide, Raul Argudin, and Luis G. Monzon, all of whom treated the assemblage to a barrage of liberal "revolutionism" in the form of speeches.

The congress accomplished absolutely nothing for the poor peasants. Why should it? That is not why it was called together. A reunion of this nature can only serve the political interests of those that organize it, and is consequently unable to be of any aid to the poor ejidatarians and landless peasants. The whole affair had the aspect of a comical dramatic sketch in which many of the most outstanding political representatives of the opposition petty bourgeoisie appeared as actors, the peasant delegates being nothing but bored spectators waiting for the curtain to ring down and the barbecue to be served. There was not, as in the Vera Cruz state agrarian congress, celebrated in Jalapa at the end of October, any Communist fraction whatsoever. The voice of our party was heard only through the leaflets distributed among the peasant delegates by outsiders having nothing to do with the meeting.

Several very pertinent questions suggest themselves to us at this time. What

Los Angeles' «Radical» S.P.

LOS ANGELES, Calif.—

"Permit or no permit, we are going to parade."

"They can't stop us from marching to the city hall."

"The cop who wields the first club makes history."

The above are characteristic statements made by William Busick, chairman of the executive board of the Socialist party of California, to 3,000 unemployed workers in the socialist-controlled unemployed conference. These words were greeted by the hungry workers with enthusiasm.

The city council, however, refused the permit and Busick, the bombastic, promptly changed his tune and urged the workers

"... to accept defeat... and march to the polls, and use our organization as a power for law, order and the return of constitutional government."

This, I think, is the premier attempt of the socialists to use the unemployed, and deserves careful attention and analysis by every worker. As the crisis drives deeper, the misery of the workers increases and similar socialist activity will appear elsewhere.

A number of questions spring to our mind. How come that the Socialist party is organizing 3,000 workers in three weeks, while the T. U. U. L. has not even one-tenth that number after 18 months of effort? Why were the socialists refused a permit to parade? Why were the rank and file so docile in the face of betrayal?

The reason the socialists succeeded in rallying the unemployed where the Left wing has failed is that the socialists had

never attempted to do anything in the situation. They were a last hope.

The Communists had been tried by the workers and found wanting. The hungry workers looked to the Left wing to lead them to bread, they were led instead in unsuccessful demonstrations.

With each demonstration for the last ten months the futility of following the present leadership of the Left wing becomes more and more apparent and the disappointment of the masses in the leadership of the Left wing is shown in the constantly decreasing number attending the demonstrations. The Socialist party, an untried factor, entered the situation and a staunch and determined mass fell into line behind it. The workers discouraged in the would-be leaders of the T. U. U. L. fall easy prey to glib charlatans.

Why were the socialists refused a permit to parade? The answer is to be found with the Communists. The Communist-led councils have never been able to develop into a real force for the struggle against misery and the city council felt that the danger from this source was not great enough for the socialists to enter as lightning reds to detract the masses from militant action. They felt that the hungry, as led by the Communists, could as yet be met with gun, bomb and club.

Chief of Police Steckel, in a burst of candor stated: "If your parade is going ahead against the wishes of the city council some of your people will be killed. We have to take steps to protect constituted authority."

("Constituted authority and government," it may be remarked, has an unbroken line of defense reaching from Steckel to "Red" Hynes, to Busick.)

For his eagerness to serve the powers that be by disrupting the movement (the "socialist" demonstration was called for February 6, four days before the previously announced T. U. U. L. demonstration), Busick received a sound drubbing.

Had there been sufficient pressure from the rank and file, pressure of a sort that only the Left wing could generate, possibly Mr. Busick would have carried out his threat in spite of his masters' opinions. That Left wing was absent, had no contact with this mass of eager material and Busick was left to carry out his betrayal unhindered. This is the reason the masses took this betrayal so docilely.

The sheer helplessness of the official leadership of the Communist party in this situation is obvious. It is due to two causes.

1. The putsch-like ordering of demonstrations. Demonstration has followed demonstration but from each one, from each attempt to reach the city hall, the workers have returned without work and without wages. With the decline of the workers' support, the brutality of the police has grown and recent demonstrations have become ultra-Leftism personified; the gathering of a few Left wing workers, the shouting of a few slogans, the raising of a few banners, the scattering of a few leaflets and a windup of bomb and billy. The situation demands a digging in, organizational work and flexibility of tactics that will make our demonstrations assemblages of strength and not of weakness.

2. The second factor that prevents us from being effective is the absolute rejection of the united front tactic by the Stalinists. An appeal to the unemployed workers in the socialist council for joint action between them and us would have had and can still have telling effects. Busick would oppose the united front but with the cry of solidarity we could expose Busick as an agent of the bosses and establish contact with the rank and file.

Another tragi-comedy is that those who in the "second period" were quite willing to make a united front with any faker, in the "third period" can see no distinction between the misleaders and the misled, and hold that a united front with the socialist unemployed conference would be the same as a united front with the socialist misleaders. It goes without saying that Busick and his ilk should be severely criticized by the Left wing in any united front.

By the way, the "third and last period of post-war capitalism" that was repeated in every paragraph of the *Daily Worker*, and with which every unit literature agent opened his report has, of late, been making but shy appearances few and far between. Explain, Jorge!

The ultimate source of the poison that is making our movement impotent is to be found in the tactics of the revisionist Centrists. Only by a return of the movement to the Marxist-Leninist course pointed out by the Left Opposition can our movement be rendered healthy again.

—CHARLES CURTISS

What is necessary now in order to assure the party of the best utilization of the developing situation in Mexico, is a real Leninist analysis of the whole situation in which Mexican realities are considered in relation to the world economy in general. Without such a correct policy we will be certain to repeat the blunders and failures of March 1929. —RUSSELL BLACKWELL.