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Republican Revolution in Spain

III. Miners' Convention

As this issue appears, the rank and file miners' movement against the treacherous reunion of the Lewis and Fishwick cliques in the United Mine Workers of America will come to a head at a convention in St. Louis to determine the course the miners shall pursue. The movement which has as its chief driving power the desire of the miners to cut loose from the domination of the reactionary union skates, has already won the support of some of the most militant section of the Illinois mine fields, of the new independent union in West Virginia, and of sections of the coal territory in Ohio, Indiana and Kansas. Betrayed, traduced, used by their leaders as pawns in dickers with the coal operators, suffering the intense misery from the effects of the general crisis added to the specific crisis in the coal industry—the most militant elements among the miners are overcoming the spirit of demoralizing and despair. It is these elements who are at present most active in the work of laying the foundation stones for a new union movement, based on the class struggle, able and willing to defend the interests of the miners, free from the bureaucratic and reactionary incubus that has destroyed the once powerful union of the American mine workers.

The Unity of Fishwick and Lewis

The revival of the militant spirit so characteristic of the miners comes at the end of a more than one year dispute between two sections of the labor officialdom—the International office headed by John L. Lewis and the Illinois district, which split away last year and established an autonomous union under the leadership of such discredited touts of the coal operators as Fishwick, John H. Walker. This entirely unprincipled dispute came to a conclusion "by court order", but in reality because the union had been sapped to such an extent that the diminished resources available to both groups of the officialdom compelled them to seek refuge in each other's arms.

Over night, Fishwick, who had denounced Lewis for every crime in the catalogue, returned to the fold of this same Lewis who, in his turn, had been working tongue and pen with might and main to prove that Fishwick and his associates were scoundrels of the deepest dye. The sudden reconciliation, however, did not result in bringing the miners' rank and file docilely under the domination of the reunited skates. Throughout Illinois, the outraged miners not only refused to pay dues to the Lewis machine but expressed strong sentiments for cutting loose from the hulk to which the U. M. W. A. has been reduced, and establishing in its place a new union. In West Virginia, a notorious scab field because of the deliberate sabotage of organization work by the Lewis clique, the new union movement has already assumed distinct form and embraces, according to various reports, from 7,000 to 9,000 members. In Kansas, for many years a stamping ground for militancy, the same sentiment prevails. To a lesser extent, Indiana and Ohio have echoed the aspirations of the Illinois miners.

The convention to be held in St. Louis on April 15, 1931 is the rallying point for this sentiment. The circumstances and auspices surrounding its convocation furnish an illuminating comment on the relationship of forces in the mine field. The prime movers officially in the fore for this convention are the "progressives" associated with the C. P. L. A., the Muste group. Keenly aware of the spirit of revolt spreading among the miners, these professional dampeners of working class militancy, yesterday's open and concealed adjutants of Fishwick and Co., have taken advantage of the absence of any substantial and genuinely militant leadership capable of opposing Lewisism and have sought to ride the wave of sound rank and file revolt. With yesterday's loyal agents of the Fishwick apparatus like Wm. Daech and similars, joined with

the professional "progressives" of Hapgood, Brophy, Stevenson and Co., who collapsed and left the miners in the lurch at every decisive moment, and continuing to use Alex Howatt who allowed Fishwick and Co. to use his reputation of bygone militancy as bait with which to entice the miners into the reactionary net—with this agglomeration of pseudo and quasi-progressives the Muste group is seeking to establish its domination of the new movement and perform its assigned function of keeping it from "going red."

The Blunders of Stalinism

That the Muste group of reformists has thus far succeeded in a measure to put itself at the head of the rank and file movement is eloquent testimony to the decrepit state of the Communist movement, particularly in the Illinois mine fields, and to the virtually complete disappearance of the National Miners Union in that state. With the

Penn. Seditious Act Seeks Victims

With the conviction of comrade Bill Lawrence, active militant of the Communist party in Philadelphia, who was tried, found "guilty" and sentenced last week under the notorious Flynn Anti-Seditious Act of Pennsylvania, the cases of other workers arrested in that state under the same law assume particular significance. In addition to a number of members of the Communist party indicted under the act, there are two Philadelphia members of the Communist League of America (Opposition), Leon Goodman and Bernard Morgenstern, against whom the court has just returned a true bill, with their trial to come up in short order.

It is clear that particularly throughout Pennsylvania, the ruling class is pursuing a deliberate policy of picking off one militant after another, prosecuting them quietly and dispatching them to years of imprisonment for the crime of fighting the battle of labor. As usual, this vicious campaign is being directed in the first place against the vanguard fighters of the working class, the Communists, with the aim of intimidating labor as a whole and hampering its struggle against the wage-cutting and standards-lowering offensive of the bosses. It is on this basis, and in the general interests of working class solidarity, that every worker and labor organization must assemble their strength of fight back the capitalist prosecutors and defend the class war prisoners.

Morgenstern and Goodman were arrested in Philadelphia for distributing the leaflet on unemployment issued by the Communist League, together with a circular urging workers to attend the unemployment demonstration organized on February 25th by the Communist party and the Left wing movement. On the basis of the declaration in the League leaflet that only the socialist revolution can finally solve the ills of the working class, the arrests were made and the indictment set forth against the two militants.

The International Labor Defense, which its Stalinist commissars have sought to convert into one of their factional appendages, at first refused to take up the case of these two workers. At the united front conference held a few weeks ago, delegates from the Philadelphia branch of our League were unseated in the presence of the I. L. D. national secretary, Engdahl. It was only after protests from a number of workers and branches of the I. L. D., to which we refer elsewhere in this issue, that the Philadelphia local of the latter organization agreed to take up the "legal defense" of Morgenstern and Goodman, which meant not to make a class fight in their case. To make clear their position and the position of the League, the two comrades have sent the following letter to the Philadelphia I. L. D.

"Comrades:
"The recent conviction of comrade Bill

Lawrence and others under the Flynn Anti-Seditious Act must not be allowed to pass without the creation of the broadest possible protest movement. These cases, and others of a similar nature, are of the same type as the case of the undersigned. Taken together, they indicate that the ruling class is engaged in a brutal attack upon the vanguard section of the labor movement which must be repulsed by all the strength at our command.

That is how the rank and file miners are repaying Stalinism for the stupidities and crimes of the past: for the bureaucratic, arbitrary, supercilious regime in the Left wing union which repelled those workers who sought in it a democratic instrument for advancing their interests; for the irresponsible, adventurist, ill-begotten "strike" of last year, called without consultation (Continued on page 3)

"Up to now, the I. L. D. contrary to its long established policy, has refused to give us anything but 'legal defense', which means to destroy the class significance of the whole fight. We earnestly believe this procedure to be a profound error calculated to injure the fight against the Flynn Act. In this connection, and bearing in mind the general campaign being made against all militants—a campaign which endangers the whole movement, we make the following proposals to the I. L. D. for its immediate consideration:

1. "A united front conference, called and organized on the broadest possible basis, should be held immediately for the purpose of drawing every labor organization into a compact body for the struggle against the Flynn Act, for the release of those already convicted under it, and for the defense of those who, like ourselves, are threatened by conviction.

2. "To conduct a widespread agitation campaign for all the workers at present involved under the Flynn Act on a working class basis, so that the class significance of the arrests, trials and convictions may be brought home to the labor movement. A purely 'legal defense', such as is proposed in our case, is not only entirely inadequate but fit solely for a 'liberal' defense movement—certainly not for a class defense organization like the I. L. D.

3. "To organize a mass meeting immediately to protest the conviction of comrade Lawrence, and to bring to popular working class attention the danger of similar convictions confronting other workers already arrested. We propose that one of the undersigned defendants in the case appear at this meeting as one of the speakers.

"These steps are proposed as preliminary to a systematic and extensive fight against the Flynn Act and the persecutions that take place under it. We make these proposals only because we are actuated by the most earnest desire to achieve the greatest possible unity of the militant movement to rally the workers in a fight against our common enemy. Our political affiliation to the Communist League (Opposition), while it differs from that of other workers in the I. L. D., impels us to seek the closest and most loyal collaboration with the workers' defense organization. We therefore anxiously await your reply to our proposals.

"Fraternally yours,
Bernard Morgenstern"

Alfonso has quit the soil of Spain the bourgeois republicans, assisted socialist allies, have proclaimed the republic. The universal acclaim with which the departure of the royal family was met by the people furnishes eloquent testimony to the profound unpopularity of the monarchy. In the proclamation of the republic, the Spanish masses have taken their first big step in breaking with the old régime and towards establishing their own rule tomorrow.

But the bloodless victory of the republican-socialist alliance over the Spanish monarchy guarantees neither the radical uprooting of monarchial rule, the establishment of the republic, nor the real people's régime of tomorrow. The essential evils with which the reign of the Bourbons afflicted the people still remain. More, the republican bourgeoisie, even with the servile aid of the social democrats, is incapable of solving any of the tasks which press with such burning urgency for solution.

The Spanish bourgeoisie now in power is bound by a thousand threads to the old monarchical system and the semi-feudal relationships on the land. In its turn, the monarchy is intimately intertwined, in its essence as well as in the person of Alfonso himself, to the prevailing mode of capitalist exploitation. Proceeding from both of them are the ties with the reactionary clergy, the big landowners, the military cliques, all of which form the chain that has, and still does fetter the emancipation of the people, of the workers and the peasants upon whose misery the strength of the ruling class has been built.

Bourgeois and monarch—those two are infinitely closer to each other than they are to the proletariat and the peasantry. As has happened before in history, and in Spain's history as well, these two ruling forces will find no great difficulty in being reconciled in the face of an independent insurrectionary proletariat and peasantry. The monarchy is not at a definite end in Spain. Alfonso is far from having given up the expectation to return. In his declaration, he has proclaimed that he does not "renounce any of my rights . . . I am waiting to learn the real expression of the collective opinion of my people". The bourgeoisie, which proved its capacity to unload the king under pressure of the masses and out of fear of itself being unloaded, is equally capable of effecting a reconciliation with the Bourbons under the pressure of other circumstances.

Can the new republican socialist combination rule, or shall we have in Spain a repetition of the abortive republic of 1873? That depends upon a number of indefinite factors, primarily upon the next stages in the development of the proletarian movement. What is already quite clear is the attitude of the new rulers towards the working class which assisted it to power. With the reactionary fury that characterizes every exploiting class which has just come to power—even though by revolution—it has already turned upon that section of the working class which has been first to manifest its class independence. In Barcelona, center of working class ferment, the rulers of the "Catalonian republic" crowned only the day before, have proclaimed martial law against the workers, killed two of them, and suppressed the 24-hours general strike. How instructive is the violence with which the "revolutionary republicans" attack the "revolution in permanence"!

The Barcelona movement is only an initial skirmish. The proletariat of Spain will yet have adequate opportunities to produce its revolutionary Communist party and to place itself at the head of the popular nation. The powerlessness of the bourgeoisie to solve the problems of the Spanish people will be a source of strength to the real revolution. Alcala Zamora, the provisional president, and the government itself, have already announced the program of the new government, and it is filled with the empty promises with which the bourgeoisie always feeds the masses. "The republic will guarantee (Continued on page 5)