

N. Y. May Day Conference

Opposition Delegates Heard Despite the Stalinist Bureaucracy

The bureaucratic calm which prevails at current meetings under the mechanical control of the Stalinist faction was rudely disturbed when a representative of the Left Opposition succeeded in addressing 500 workers composed of party members and sympathizers at the United Front May Day Conference March 30, in Manhattan Lyceum, New York City. The applause that followed his remarks spread consternation in the ranks of the bureaucrats in charge of the meeting. Despite their efforts to ignore the delegation of the N. Y. branch of the Communist League of America (Opposition), its presence pervaded the entire proceedings of the conference.

The composition of the conference was of a narrow character including only delegates from the party, its auxiliary organizations, and the enfeebled new unions. The credentials committee in its report did not of course read the names of the organizations present, for this would reveal too openly the limitedness of the "united front", but was compelled to admit, however, the absence of representation from A. F. of L. locals. This deficiency, it was said, must be overcome at the next conference to be held April 20, although no one undertook to discuss how this was to be done.

The Opposition delegates consisted of comrades Herbert Capelis, Harry Milton, and George Ray.

The conference was opened with agitational speeches by Amter and Johnstone. When these had exhausted themselves, discussion was begun from the floor. The unsuspecting chairman called upon George Ray, the second one to submit his name, to speak. Opening his remarks with an analysis of the economic crisis and presenting a perspective of a new wave of struggle for the American workers which demands the unity of the Communist forces as a prerequisite, comrade Ray said, while a perfect stillness reigned in the hall: "I represent the Communist League of America also known as the Left Opposition. Last year when we came to this conference we were forcibly ejected at the door. This year we are admitted. This is a great advance for the Communist party. But a further advance must be made so that next year the conference will see us once again inside the ranks of the party. We want nothing better than the right to fight side by side with the members of the party in the struggles of the workers. In rallying the workers for May Day we will do our part."

A wave of applause rolled through the hall upon the conclusion of his remarks. It was the instinctive response of the workers who for the moment thought that a change of policy by the party leadership had occurred. It was a demonstration of how the workers really regard the Left Opposition despite the mountains of slander and falsehood heaped upon it. It showed not a fighting nor an aggressive mood, but a deep passive sympathy which augurs ominously for the future of the present aggregation of bureaucrats imposed on the Party.

The machine immediately commenced a torrent of abuse in order to counteract the effects of comrade Ray's speech. Amter in a very emphatic manner informed the delegates that this representative would never have been permitted to speak had they known that he came from this "renegade" organization. He did not forget to denounce Leon Trotsky "an enemy of the Soviet Union". Amis, very much upset by his unpardonable blunder, parroted Amter and duly chastised himself.

The next clash occurred during the collection when the Opposition delegation submitted to the chairman five dollars in cash and a pledge of ten dollars. Amis examined the contribution suspiciously but forearmed by experience said nothing, and passed it to his less blundering colleagues on the platform who similarly examined it with knowing looks and smiles. It was finally laid

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aside while speculation ran strong among the workers in the vicinity of the delegation as to whether it would be accepted or rejected. At the conclusion of the collection—Amter and Co. meanwhile having decided upon a course of action—Amis was seen holding in one hand the five dollar bill and in the other the pledge. "I want to take this matter to a vote," he proclaimed. He then launched into a fit of violent abuse and ended by rejecting the "filthy lucre", while the faithful from below joined in a chorus of shouts of approval.

When the money was returned there was a visible sign of revival of spirits in the praesidium which had been somewhat downcast since comrade Ray's speech. Broad grins now peered down upon the delegation from the platform. Amter who had been trained thoroughly in the Stalin-Pepper-Lovestone school of maneuvering could feel that he did not disgrace the tradition by this little maneuver. But the real victor was the Opposition for it had demonstrated its readiness and willingness to assist in every way the May Day preparations, and that sank deeper than all the circus contortions of the Amters and the Amises.

The credentials committee report did not mention a word about the delegation from the Communist League of America (Opposition). A Stalinist supporter in the conference who does not understand that his faction is infinitely stronger in silence and violence than in argument demanded to know why nothing was said, and proposed a motion to exclude the Trotskyites from the conference. From the platform it was lamely stated that this delegation was not recognized. Discussion of course was not permitted, and comrades of the Opposition attempting to get the floor were shouted down and threatened.

The hollow general discussion then continued. It appeared that from this point on the bureaucratic tranquility would proceed undisturbed, when George Marks, a member of the City Executive Committee of the Unemployed Councils, and a very active member of the Downtown Council, well known for his hard and persistent work, took the floor. He spoke of the activities of the Downtown Unemployed Council and its preparations for May Day. Addressing himself to the leading active members of the Councils he asked whether they who had worked side by side with him.

Hungarians Struggle against Corruption

In a previous issue of the *Militant* we acquainted our readers with the situation in the Hungarian Sick Benefit and Educational Federation, the only mass organization of Hungarian workers under party control. We mentioned some of the charges of corruption, mismanagement and misuse of funds raised against the party leaders by committees of investigation representing several branches of the organization. The leading elements of these committees until recently were party members and close sympathizers. The opposition took the correct position that because of the corruption of the party leaders the organization should not become antagonistic to the party and should not withdraw its support from the party and its auxiliary organizations. The fight of the opposition is not for severing connections with the party but for the elimination of the corrupt leaders (most of whom are petty bourgeois careerists) replacing them with rank and file party members. We can find no fault with its demand for workers' democracy in the organization or with the demand for ideological control instead of mechanical control. But the opposition certainly made a mistake when it failed to safeguard itself against the possibility of being identified with anti-Communist elements which try to attach themselves to, or make a united front with, all bona fide opposition within the Communist movement. An opposition failing to repudiate such elements will be discredited by them. An opposition, fighting for the regeneration of the Communist movement, at the same time must carry on a vigorous, relentless fight against all anti-Communist elements. Otherwise it runs the danger of degenerating into a rallying center for the enemies of Communism.

A Wrong Point of Departure

A very serious shortcoming of this new opposition in the Hungarian language movement of the party is its wrong point of departure. It looks upon the situation in the Hungarian Bureau as a local, isolated phenomenon and it draws the wrong conclusion that it can be remedied by an isolated local action. It does not see that bureaucratic corruption, the contempt of leadership for the workers, the practise of mech-

anical control, petty bourgeois careerism, lack of democracy in the party and in the organizations under party control are not exceptional phenomena limited to the Hungarian Bureau or to the American section of the Communist International. It is the same story throughout the whole International, finding its source in what we call Stalinism. The main feature of Stalinism, as a party régime, is a bureaucratic apparatus, independent of the party, not responsible to the party, introducing the system of appointment of party functionaries in place of elections, depriving the membership of the right of criticism, the expression of any disagreement. The Hungarian Bureau is part and parcel of the bureaucratic apparatus built by Stalin in every party of the Comintern. Since organizational questions are closely related to questions of principles, policies and tactics, it would be absurd to suppose that the creation of such an organizational apparatus is due to the will of any one man. No, it is the result of the pressure on the party by classes hostile to the proletariat. It seems to us that such questions are disregarded by the opposition in the Hungarian movement. That is the reason why it has no political basis, why it has no political perspective and why it failed to align itself with the International Left Opposition. Under such circumstances its struggle is futile.

More Examples of Running Amuck

In my previous article it was mentioned that the I. W. W. has made an attempt to use this opportunity for an attack upon Communism. It sent an organizer on a national tour to tell the Hungarian workers that because members of the Hungarian Bureau are accused of corruption, the Marxian theories are all wrong and the workers should embrace syndicalism. The party leaders met this attack in typical Stalinist fashion. It was explained in the *Uj Elore* that the I. W. W. are a bunch of counter-revolutionary fascists, who are in league with the social fascists, who, in turn, are the agents of the fascist. Therefore the I. W. W. meetings should be broken up. The I. W. W. organizer went as far as Detroit, holding meetings in Buffalo, Cleveland and other cities, without any of his meetings

being disrupted. After the Clevelanding, which was held in the party-con Workers' Home, the *Uj Elore* published the news that the Cleveland meeting of the I. W. W. was captured by the party, the I. W. W. organizer was beaten up and this example must be followed everywhere. "Make the I. W. W.s swallow their teeth", said *Uj Elore*. Nothing of the sort happened in Cleveland, but the party leaders in Detroit took the word of *Uj Elore* and organized an attack on the I. W. W. meeting. Unfortunately for them, the I. W. W. members also read the *Uj Elore*. Therefore they were well prepared, with the result that when the attack came they gave the party members a terrific beating. The same thing happened in Chicago. The last meeting was held in New York. Here the Bureau members organized the attack. They were beaten up severely. The report in the *Daily Worker* said that the party had no intention of beating up the I. W. W. But it failed to explain the peaceful intention of the call in *Uj Elore* to "make the I. W. W.s swallow their teeth."—Y. S.

Communist Tasks in the Workmens Circle

There can be no doubt in the mind of any class-conscious worker who not only has transferred—because of sentimental reasons—his loyalty from the S. P. or any other political organization, to the Communist movement, but has also done some studying and thinking and has learned something from the leaders of the revolution that the splitting of the existing workers' fraternal organizations was not only a blunder but a crime. No doubt if Lenin were alive, he would have repeated his words:

"A greater lack of sense and more harm to the revolution than this attitude of the 'Left' revolutionists cannot be imagined."

Yes, I will repeat. More harm to the revolution than this attitude of the "third period" leadership cannot be imagined. The danger to the movement is almost irreparable. Imagine the loss of contact with tens of thousands of workers, the majority of whom are a potential element for the revolutionary movement. The loss of prestige even among our followers in the W. C. and the I. W. C. of 20,000 and out of these only between five and six thousand have left. What happened to the rest? Most of them have become apathetic and a great number have fallen under the influence of the S. P. leadership.

This is the situation created by circumstances over which we have no control and Communists should not limit themselves to the evaluation of the subjective conditions but also consider the steps to follow this diagnosis.

First, we are faced with an accomplished fact. A new fraternal order was organized. What should be our attitude? In my opinion, our attitude should be the same as to any other fraternal organization where workers predominate, allowing—as in the case of the more radical unions—for a different attitude in certain situations that may arise.

Then what fraternal organization shall a Communist join? A class conscious worker should join the fraternal organization where the working class elements are more backward and that gives him a basis for more useful work for the revolutionary cause.

Then you advise me to join the W. C. or the I. W. C. in preference to the I. W. O.? Don't you think that by joining it we help to support the counter-revolutionary elements that control the organization?

So you are helping the capitalist class by working for it; so, also you are helping by joining a union; by paying rent; by going to a movie show; by buying your food. The whole life of a worker is nothing else but service to the "community"—that means service to the ruling class. His strongest weapons are organization and revolutionary consciousness—and this can only be attained by the most class conscious workers participating in the daily struggle of the working class, through the various organizations. Therefore, the question should be asked, when joining, where can I be of the most use to the movement?

Why not unite with the Right wing (Lovestoneites) in the W. C. and the I. W. C.?

Our purposes are far apart. As opportunists they are always looking for immediate results and always overlook the revolutionary perspectives, especially now. They are losing their fast dissipating ranks in two directions: to the Right, like B. Miller, Benjamin, etc.; and on the other side, joining the party. They are anxious for allies. The only trouble is that the army is so small that nobody pays any attention to them, as the so-called opposition in the W. C., the Left wing in the S. P.