

Slogan of the 6-Hour Day

DISCUSSION ARTICLE

In the class struggle in general and particularly in the U. S. A. the major part of the activity of a revolutionary political party should be on the field of direct economic struggle; in the factory, work shop or in the union every opportunity being seized upon to arouse the fighting spirit of the working class, to develop its class consciousness and endeavor to lead the working class toward political struggle. But the present unemployment situation presents a particular phase of the class struggle. Moreover the present unemployment situation has its own peculiarities, coming as it does after a long period of unheard of prosperity (eight years almost, if minor fluctuations are disregarded). Second, while the U. S. A. might temporarily solve its crisis to a certain extent, considering the present world conditions one cannot by the widest stretch of imagination anticipate another eight years of prosperity (such as those preceding the present crisis) in the near future. Allowing for temporary upward swings, it must be noted that the standing permanent army of unemployed has been increased. In other words, the number of jobless even in a new period of prosperity will be greater than previously. Also the cyclical crises will be more frequent with every reason to expect them to become greater in severity. Such are the present conditions of the unemployment situation which have injected the question of unemployment into the arena of the class struggle in the sharpest form. The capitalist class endeavors by use of every conceivable method, governmental, economic, etc., to place the entire burden upon the working class. The working class, even sometimes against its will, is compelled to resist in self-defense and sometimes to take the offensive. Thus the whole question of unemployment, regardless of whether or not the working class is class conscious enough to realize it or not, is elevated to the position of a political struggle.

Though the Communist movement, considering its program of action, places the emphasis on the direct economic struggle, in considering the question of unemployment it must be dealt with as a particular phase of the class struggle. The struggle for working class relief is carried on from two angles or avenues. But each is incomplete without the other. The purpose of both is to place the burden of unemployment upon the backs of the capitalist class and thus strengthen the hand of the working class and at the same time weaken the capitalist class. Also to make it possible to unite the unemployed workers with the employed this further strengthening the working class and weakening the capitalist class.

The two phases of the struggle for relief are of course (1) the fight for social insurance and (2) the struggle for the shorter working week with no reduction of pay. In considering the question of unemployment as a special problem of the class struggle these two avenues of struggle are very nearly on the same footing. But speaking from the general angle of the unemployed struggle, the emphasis must be placed on the fight for social insurance for several reasons which will be briefly set forth here. From this it follows that the treatment in comrade Swaback's article is inadequate. From a general standpoint the placing of the emphasis on the slogan of the six hour day as in the 17th paragraph of the article of February 1 is wrong. Also the slogan itself should be "The shorter working week with no reduction in pay" instead of the "six hour day" slogan.

As to the importance of social insurance from the general standpoint of the unemployment problem, there is and will remain a standing army of unemployed, with no means of support. Capitalism makes no provision for these unless forced to do so. That is the horrible feature of capitalism which arises from the very nature of capitalist production. The law of surplus value casts up and constantly augments this army. The capitalist class seeking to maintain its super-profits, seeks to use this standing army of unemployed against the employed workers. Social insurance while not offering complete and permanent relief under capitalism places the chief stumbling block in the path of the designs of the capitalist class. This is the most important explanation of their hostility toward it. Not a small proportion of the ravings of the English bourgeoisie against the dole system comes from their difficulty to get blacklegs for strikebreaking purposes which makes it difficult to lower wages in order to compete in the world arena of capitalism. The amount of dollars or pounds paid out for the dole is by far not their chief worry. They would gladly pay out twice that amount any

time for complete domination over the wages of the working class. All the history of the class struggle under capitalism proves this. In America such strikes as the shopmen's strike of 1922, where the Railroads spent money like water to defeat the shopmen, are good examples.

Secondly, social insurance and the fight for it offers the chief instrument by which the unemployed and the employed workers can be united. If they cannot be united on this basis they cannot be united at all.

Third: granted that the six hour day could be obtained at once (which it cannot) even at this time it cannot be proved that this would provide jobs for all the jobless and even if it would it would be only a question of a very short period before the situation would be the same as at present, due to rationalization, new machinery and the law of surplus value. Thus social insurance offers the most permanent form of relief (even though it is not complete in itself) and places the biggest stumbling block in the path of the capitalist class. Also at some point the social reformers are compelled to attempt to lower or abolish social insurance just as at the

present moment in England. This is an important point in their exposure.

All of the above does not prevent the revolutionary party from shifting the main part of its efforts to obtaining the shorter working week when objective conditions are such as to make the greatest gains possible on this field of struggle. But since the question of unemployed relief or that part of it we choose to call "social insurance" is of very great importance for all time and particularly at this time when because of the sharpness of the projection of the unemployed problem before the working class and because of the continued large number of unemployed we cannot be hasty in shifting the major part of our efforts over to the struggle for a shorter working week. Also it must be answered from a general standpoint that the emphasis remains on the struggle for social insurance when considering the question of unemployment as a special phase of the class struggle. And finally, just as the proper tactics in the struggle for unemployed insurance should be conducted in such a way as to prepare the ground for the struggle for the shorter working week during the upward curve, so must the struggle for the shorter working week be conducted in such a way as to prepare the ground for the further advancement of the struggle for social insurance when that struggle again becomes the order of the day.

That the struggle for social presents greater dangers of opportunity goes without saying. The history of the party's efforts in that direction proves this conclusively. All of the criticism of the manner in which that struggle has been conducted by the party appearing in the *Militant* and that contained in comrade Swaback's article was correct and of positive value. But if it is true that the fight for the immediate demand of social insurance, which is in its very essence a political struggle, offers more danger of opportunist deviations than a struggle that is approached from a direct economic industrial base, it is also true that danger is greater in any struggle that is political from its very beginning. Moreover it is also true that the struggle that begins from a direct economic industrial base meets with this same danger the moment it reaches the stage where it is elevated to a political level.

It has been emphasized numerous times that all along the line we must constantly stress and point out to the working class that no permanent relief from capitalism's chief contradictions can be expected or had under capitalism. Nothing said above in connection with social insurance contradicts this in the least. The manner in which the struggle is conducted is the all important question.

—JOHN MIHELIC.

(To Be Continued)

The I. W. W. and the Unemployment Problem

At the beginning of the present crisis, the I. W. W. saw no need of spending much energy upon the unemployment problem. Now, having obtained a late start, they are presenting as their main slogans: "The six-hour day and five-day week" and "Bread lines or picket lines?". Leaflets, stickers and meetings are being pushed everywhere in the country that they can rally forces. While their program has a certain positive side, it is far exceeded by its negative features, which we point out not for the sake of abstract criticism alone but because they are so characteristic of the sectarian futility to which the once vigorous organization has been condemned.

In their reaction against purely parliamentary activity—as against revolutionary political action which the Stalinist bureaucrats have understood so poorly—the I. W. W. have swung in the opposite direction and are narrowing the possibilities for development by the lack of a correct analysis and program. Their poverty in Marxism, to which they acknowledge a formal adherence at times, is shown by their explanation of the cause of unemployment. In one leaflet they say: "Unemployment is caused by long hours and short wages." In another, they say that culminative (organic or permanent) unemployment has been added because of "the industrialization of the backward countries and the increased productivity of labor chiefly through automatic machines". Increased productivity and automatic machinery have undoubtedly played a big part in the increase of unemployment, but the so-called industrialization of the backward countries—a flashback in the I. W. W. of the notorious "de-colonization" theory—does not reflect realities. On the one hand, imperialism gives an impetus to the development of industry in the colonial countries; on the other, it strives to keep these countries in subjection and backwardness. This contradiction is one of the great sources of colonial revolution and the need for supporting them which the I. W. W. fails to acknowledge.

But even the development of the backward countries is still not the determining cause of unemployment. The latter is produced by the whole system of productive relationships under capitalism, and the crises which accompany it are intensified by the fact that capitalist production has become so intertwined on a world market that over-production constantly threatens its

equilibrium, produces crises, and mass unemployment.

Even if we were to obtain shorter hours and bigger pay from the capitalists we would not have eliminated unemployment. One leaflet says: "Unemployment can be cured by small hours and big pay." The only cure for unemployment is the overthrow of the capitalist system.

The way the official party is fighting for unemployment insurance must be criticized as a mixture of parliamentary opportunism and adventurism. But to swing to the other extreme and say that a fight for unemployment insurance is wrong is equally false. By leaving this field to the reformists, opportunists and labor fakers, we allow them to corral large masses of workers by having them appear as the only defenders of their immediate interests and needs.

In the leaflet: "Bread lines or picket lines?", we read: "Such is our program to abolish unemployment and such are its consequences." The I. W. W. once knew that unemployment could only be abolished

by the proletarian revolution: apparently it no longer knows this elementary truth. As for a program, picket lines do not constitute one. They are the tactics to carry out a program. A correct one must resolve around the slogan for the six-hour day and five-day week without wage reductions.

Organizationally, the I. W. W. have out-Stalinized the Stalinists by organizing an "Unemployed Workers Industrial Union" (!) with membership cards. The party formed unemployment councils and tied them to the T. U. U. L., determining in advance a narrow basis for the unemployed movement which must be made up of workers with varying ideologies who will follow revolutionary leadership only on the basis of the most elementary issue. By seeking to confine the unemployment movement—and in the form of a union, at that—strictly as a tail to the sect which the I. W. W. is today, to reject in practice the need of the united front, is to commit, on a smaller scale, the same blunder as the official party leadership.

—HUGO OEHLER.

A Step Forward

From reliable sources we learn:

At the last meeting of the New York party fraction of workers in the fur industry, one of the comrades proposed that the policy be adopted to send some fur workers still under the influence of the Left wing into the Right wing international. This proposal was motivated by the following facts: The Left wing union (N. T. W. I. U.) no longer has anything but a purely nominal influence in the fur trade—so far as organizational control is concerned, at the very least. It has only three to five shops under contract. The Right wing union (Kaufman and Co.) has succeeded in re-establishing its control over a large part of the trade. It is not true that the Right wing union is a "company union"; it is a class collaboration union with reactionary leadership and policies. It is the duty of the Left wing to send those few workers still under its control into the Right wing union to help build up a Left wing opposition to Kaufmanism, instead of continuing to deceive itself with the baseless idea that it still has any direct control in the fur trade.

This proposal, after some discussion, was adopted by the fraction unanimously.

The Left Opposition, which advanced this proposal some time ago, can only greet its adoption by the party fraction as a step forward in the proper direction. It indicates that our point of view, despite the slanders of the party bureaucrats, has not fallen on deaf ears and is being seriously considered by the party comrades who study the relationship of forces objectively and not through bureaucratic spectacles.

It is characteristic that upon learning of the decision, Stachel, one of the recent additions to the staff of trade union "specialists" in the party, informed the comrades of the fraction that their proposal was not acceptable, at least not completely. To straighten out the matter so that the "line" may retain its halo of infallibility, the fraction is to meet soon with Foster, Browder and Stachel. We hope the comrades of the fraction will stand their ground firmly and not be frightened away from it by accusations of "Trotskyism" or the like. Their position is entirely correct, and the comrades in the other needle trades fractions would do well to follow suit in adopting the course recommended for the Left wing in the needle trades by the Left Opposition.

STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, CIRCULATION, ETC., REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF CONGRESS OF AUG. 24, 1912.

Of The Militant, published twice a month at New York, N. Y. for April 15, 1931.
State of New York:
County of New York.

Before me, a Notary in and for the State and county aforesaid personally appeared Max Shachtman, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Managing Editor of the Militant and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 411, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor and business managers are:

Publisher: Communist League of America (Opposition) 84 East 10th St., New York, N. Y.

Editor: None.

Managing Editor: Max Shachtman, 84 East 10th St., N. Y.

Business Manager: Rose Karsner, 84 East 10th St., New York City.

2. That the owner is: Communist League of America (Opposition), 84 East 10th St., N. Y. C. Martin Abern, 84 East 10th St., N. Y. C. J. P. Cannon, 84 East 10th St., N. Y. C. Max Shachtman, 84 East 10th St., N. Y. C. Maurice Spector, 84 East 10th St., N. Y. C. Arne Swaback, 84 East 10th St., N. Y. C.

3. That the known bondholders, mortgages, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: None.

4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain

not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stocks and securities; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him.

Max Shachtman, Managing Editor.
Sworn to and subscribed before me this 30th day of March 1931.

Geo. Lorch, Notary Public.

(My Commission expires March 30, 1931.)