

EDITORIAL NOTES

THE MINERS' CONVENTION

The miners' convention at St. Louis marked a step in the struggle to break the shackles of the Lewis machine and clear the way for an independent union, despite the glaring defects and weaknesses revealed there. Under the circumstances the presence of a hundred delegates bears testimony to a profound sentiment in the rank and file for a final break with the organization of the betrayers. At the same time the St. Louis convention demonstrated that the rank and file movement is only at the beginning of serious organization and has not yet found its proper leadership. The convention attracted a comparatively small delegation when all the conditions working in its favor are considered, and the decisions arrived at fell short of the minimum requirements of the situation. The pseudo-progressives have stood at the head of the new movement so far. This tells the story of its weakness and its failure. For these people shrink from a real battle with Lewis and the operators and are incapable of conducting it. The insurgent movement will gain momentum and raise the miners to their feet for the conflict with the reactionaries only insofar as it is steeled in irreconcilable hostility to their shields, the "progressives".

The idiotic policy of the official Communist party is responsible for the slow progress of the new revolt and the temporary supremacy of the progressive faint-hearts. After the formation of the National Miners' Union in 1928, Foster and Co. devoted their talents to the task of discrediting themselves and Communism. Then they insisted that the miners come to an independent union by the path marked out for them in the blueprint. They did not understand that the masses would find their way to this goal by divergent and, at times, contradictory paths. The boycott of the Fishwick convention in 1930 was a colossal blunder which cleared the way for the great betrayal recently consummated.

Their approach to the new revolt was another exhibition of Centrist bankruptcy. First they denounced the movement and proclaimed a boycott of the convention. Then, at the last moment, Foster came out with a call for the Left wing miners to go to the convention and work there for a united front with the N. M. U. This is precisely what the Opposition said at the start, and that advice—which Foster appropriated when it was too late—was acknowledged by the customary drivel about the "renegades". As a result of the contradictions, mix-ups and delays, the official party and its sympathizers didn't have a single delegate at the convention. The representative of the N. M. U. was given the floor through the pressure of the delegates of the Communist League and the Left wing miners working with them.

The work of comrades Angelo, Allard and others in the convention deserves the highest commendation. Even if their forces were not very large they succeeded in setting an example for Left wing militants which will not be lost. They crystallized a firm minority in opposition to the milk-and-water leadership of the progressives. They brought forward the program which the whole movement will be compelled to adopt as the price of survival and development. In our opinion, the statement they issued to the delegates lacked sharpness and militancy in characterizing Howat and his associates. All those who helped Fishwick and Walker helped to betray the miners! Let us say that openly, clearly and loudly so that everybody will understand what happened and how it happened and prevent a repetition of it.

The absence of John Watt from the convention is something which Left wing militants must note with regret. Comrade Watt has suffered under enormous provocation. He has been persecuted and slandered villainously, as we have pointed out on derers who have discredited themselves, and the name of John Watt means a great deal to the miners, especially in Illinois. That is why we think any abstention from the movement on his part, when a great new struggle is unfolding, will be harmful to the movement and doubly harmful to his own prestige.

THE ROAD TO A NEW UNION

The delegates who spoke in the miners' convention from the standpoint of the Left Opposition demanded a resolute course toward the formation of a new union and a

united front with the National Miners' Union and all other independent groups and tendencies, with the goal of union into a single independent organization on a class basis. This is the only way. The formation of the National Miners' Union marked only the first stage in a drawn-out process of separating the mines from the perfidious rule of Lewis and Walker. That separation will take place along the line of a new union, despite temporary set-backs and zig-zags. The miners cannot free their hands for struggle in any other way. After the great betrayal in Illinois they will be compelled to realize this in an increasing degree and they will move toward a new union irresistibly. Those who oppose it will be swept out of the way.

The progressives are close enough to the rank and file to sense this. That is why they did not dare to oppose the idea openly at the St. Louis convention. Their tactics there were to delay and sabotage the movement while giving lip service to the aim. The next wave of the movement, forced up by the unbearable conditions of the miners, will drive them from this position and compel them to go with the new union movement or back to Lewis and Walker. It is very probable that they will split over this question. The Left wing must work to hasten this development and strengthen its own positions in the process.

The leadership of a resolute Left wing is the prerequisite for the success of the new union movement. But this leadership must be the leadership of the masses of workers, not of paper organizations, and it will not be gained in a day or by decree. The first big draft of the future troops of the new independent union are now in the movement represented at St. Louis. The National Miners' Union has only a section of the vanguard, isolated from the masses by a false policy. For that reason the Communists and the Left wing must penetrate this movement and shape its course from within. This idea must be made clear to the Communist workers. Events have confirmed its correctness a dozen times over and are beginning to hammer it into the wooden heads of the leaders.

On the other hand the workers sympathizing with the National Miners' Union represent a great dynamic force, even though false leadership has dispersed and demoralized them for the time. They are our natural allies, and our delegates at St. Louis were absolutely right in demanding a united front with them. The Communist League will work in the future as in the past for the union of all currents tending toward a new union on a militant basis and for the union of all Communist and Left wing workers within the broader movement.

At a time when the sentiment of the workers and the pressure of circumstance is driving the "progressives" to talk of a new union, the editorial in the *Revolutionary Age*—proclaiming the death of the new union movement and calling for a return to the U. M. W. A.—adds a touch of irony to the situation. Muste and Co. are without the corrective of principle but they feel the pressure of the masses. Lovetone and Gitlow lack both: How hopelessly lost are these people who only yesterday expelled the Opposition from the Party for "opportunism"!

THE AFFAIR AT CITY COLLEGE

The recent flare-up in New York City College is an event of interest to the revolutionary labor movement. Ten members of the Social Problems Club—a student organization for the discussion of social questions—were suspended for distributing a leaflet attacking the administration and demanding the reinstatement of Max Weiss, a Communist who had been expelled previously. In their leaflet the students demanded the restoration of "extra-curricular" rights for their organization which would give them the right to discuss questions outside the limits prescribed by the school authorities. This is nothing more than a demand for the ordinary democratic rights of citizenship.

Our sympathies are warmly with the insurgent students and we hope their courage will not fail them. It is gratifying to see that student organizations from a number of other colleges and universities have already declared their solidarity with the suspended students of City College. But the issue has a wider interest. The labor movement has a very good reason to champion the rights of the students in general.

to put social questions on the agenda for free discussion without arbitrary professorial supervision, the workers have a particular concern. Workers' organizations, and those under Communist influence in the first rank, ought to come forward in support of this demand.

The case is interesting from another angle. It indicates the revival of a radical trend among the young intellectuals. Such a development is not without importance. It was natural for the first signs of a student awakening to be manifested in such a place as City College. This is a great popular institution supported by public funds. The students from proletarian families, striving to rise out of the working class, meet there the small bourgeois elements slipping down into it. Among students of this type the social question will acquire an increasing importance.

TROTSKY

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Miners' Revolt Checked at Muste Confab

(Continued from page 1)

Joe Tash, who was present on behalf of the National Miners' Union, but not a delegate, obtained the floor partly due to the fairness of chairman Haynes and by motion made by delegates supporting the Left Communist Opposition. He said that the N. M. U. had not sent delegates knowing this convention would not take proper action. A few minutes later he added that he wanted the floor in order to speak to the honest rank and file delegates present. If a Communist knows that a convention will not take proper action but that there are nevertheless honest rank and file delegates present then it becomes so much more a Communist duty to endeavor to send delegates who will know how to act in order to defeat the bankrupt reformers and their wrong policies as well as to win the workers to the Communist ranks. The solution presented by Tash was a proposal that the convention adopt the program of the N. M. U., elect a rank and file committee and form a united front with the N. M. U. This was a complete right-about turn from the former position of boycotting the convention and came very near to the correct policy previously advanced by the Left Communist Opposition and published in the April first issue of the *Militant*.

We might add, if this convention was worthy of being asked to form a united front with the N. M. U. it should not have been boycotted. That merely gives the reformers and fakers full control. This policy of the Stalinist bureaucrats played into the hands of these elements. The failure of the Muste-Howat wing played into the hands of the Lewis-Fishwick operators united front.

As the convention proceeded further, showing its inability for decisive action toward the formation of a new union, the question finally was referred to a Policy Committee elected by the convention to report back. This Policy Committee narrowed down the forces and gave the Muste-Howat element full control. Its report to the convention brought forth the following proposals: First, to reject the Lewis-Fishwick compromise. This was accepted unanimously. Secondly, to refuse payment of capita tax to any branch of the U. M. W. of A., and to demand that the charters of "dead locals" be withdrawn in order to eliminate them. This proposal was carried although the latter part is meaningless because to refuse to pay a per capita tax to the U. M. W. of A. means to be out of it.

The third and most vital point was the following: "That the delegates and representatives in the convention create a permanent policy committee of two from each district; these committees to be selected by the representatives of each respective district, which shall function as a national Policy Committee and that each local union select local committees whose duties will be to keep the district committee informed concerning developments from time to time."

After three days of convention and all that occurred before it, the Muste-Howat

reformists could offer only this, which meant offering nothing, an acknowledgment of bankruptcy. Gerry Allard immediately introduced a motion for the formation of a new union and to set up the apparatus for it now. Other delegates supporting the Left Opposition views spoke in detail for the correctness of his motion and for the defeat of the committee's report. One delegate Dan Winnigan of Indiana, and apparently the only general supporter of the party among the delegates, also supported this motion.

Some of the so-called progressives, however, realized that the proposal of the Policy Committee needed a bit of sugar coating. This was accomplished in a substitute introduced by Haggood and accepted by the Policy Committee reading as follows: "The purpose of the Policy Committee shall be to continue the agitation in order to keep the workers alive to their own interests so that we will be in a position to build a new national union at the proper time and to help in the organization of the new union in the outlying districts such as West Virginia and Ohio." Haggood's substitute motion was adopted by 81 votes in favor and seven against, thus defeating the motion of Allard for the formation of a new union. Finally, it was completely proved that the Muste-Howat reformists were unanimous against a new union at this allegedly "inopportune" time.

What is the sum and substance of the results of this convention? They are negative. It decided to reject the Lewis-Fishwick sell-out agreement, it decided to refuse to pay the per capita tax to these fakers. By this time, the latter in combination with the operators have just as much "evidence" against the rank and file workers as if they had built a new union. They will use that wherever possible to blacklist and to expel, and to employ other means of suppression in an endeavor to smash the rank and file movement. The failure of the convention means the failure to build a real instrument for both the defensive and offensive of the coal miners. None of the problems was solved. The policy of the Muste-Howat outfit played into the hands of the enemy. The boycott policy pursued by the National Miners' Union elements under direction of the party bureaucrats despite its turn, which came too late, is largely responsible for making this possible. It helped to secure the control for the Muste-Howat group which could otherwise easily have been dislodged.

The Left Communist Opposition warned in advance against the bankruptcy of these Muste "progressives". The delegation supporting our views emphasized this before the delegates and proposed the correct course. The problems of the miners remain thus far unsolved and the course proposed by the Left Opposition remains as correct now as it was then. New miners' revolts will take place and our forces will continue to fight for a correct course.

CORRECTION

A regrettable error appeared in our last issue, towards the end of comrade Trotsky's article on "The Successes of Socialism and the Dangers of Adventurism" The fourth paragraph from the end of the article (bottom of page 5, column 1), should read "D. To abandon the false national and international perspective of an economic development which flows inevitably from the theory of socialism in one country", instead of "... which flows inevitably from the methodology of Lenin."

—HUGO OEHLER.