

LETTERS from the MILITANTS

ON THE PARTY'S TURN IN THE NEEDLE TRADES BOSTON.—

At the last council meeting of the Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union, Finegold reported for the National Board on the change in policy for the union. He declared that the N. B. had decided to start building oppositions in the old unions since we call and call the workers and they don't come to us, because the old union still controls their jobs and they are afraid of losing them. He pointed out the disadvantages laid upon us by being far away from the workers, letting the Amalgamated raise the dues, and many other things that were done under the heads of the workers. Were we to have had fighting oppositions, these things would not happen and we must now begin to work there energetically. We are not sending anybody back, he said, but intend to work through our sympathizers in the old unions.

He also made a long speech on the change in the governing of our union, about more democracy, about having separate branches for the various trades. But that was not a decision. We were still to get a communication and then discuss it.

Nevertheless, we had a discussion on working in the old unions. They always told the workers: We have nothing to do with the company unions and to work in the old unions means to give up our own union. They had to say these things to discredit the Opposition. There was, they said, no difference between us and the Lovestone policy. We both said that work must be carried on in the old unions.

Comrade Eva Weiner and I took the floor and spoke for the policy. We told them that it is about time they woke up. We should have done this work long ago. We do not mean that the workers must go back and liquidate the Left wing union, as some have expressed themselves, but that we are going to build oppositions of the workers who are there. A party member tried to attack our standpoint but we replied that the Opposition had said that this should be done some time ago, and that if the workers want to understand what the policy of the Opposition is, they should read the Militant.

Then Finegold tried to save the day. When the Opposition said we must work in the old unions, it was not yet the time to do it. He attacked our open letter to the party on unemployment, where we proposed to ask the socialist party and other labor organizations for a united front. The meeting was well advanced by then, and so it was adjourned, but I announced that if this question was to be raised we had something to say about it.

Last Monday, we had a membership meeting where the report was given again and a hot discussion took place. The workers are against it. They have been so much confused that they cannot get it straight. I took the floor again to present our viewpoint to the well-attended meeting where it could not be distorted. It seemed as though everyone opened his eyes wide and looked at me as though to say: We heard quite a different story about you!

When comrade Bleeker spoke here a few weeks ago, a worker attacked us by saying that our policy was like Lovestone's, to liquidate the union. Well, at the union meeting he rose and said: 'A few weeks ago I heard Sylvia Bleeker and she said the same thing I now hear from Finegold. I was the only one there to attack her. Now I wish she was here and speak from this platform. Why don't you say you are adopting their policy? What are you afraid of?'

In his summary, Finegold replied to everybody. Toward the end, he said: 'Now in regards to Sylvia. I wish she were here for I would have something to say to her. But she has a representative here and I will say this to her: When they proposed to work in the old unions it was ridiculous, for we controlled most of the workers [how long ago was that?] or a great many. The same applies to the Five Year Plan in Russia. When Trotsky advocated it, it was not yet the time and therefore he was dangerous. Furthermore, we are not going to care what anybody says about our taking policies from this side or that. As long as the policy is a good one for the union we are going to use it.'

I asked for the floor to answer his speech, but was not given it. The meeting was adjourned. But I answered many privately after the meeting and the opportunity will still present itself to answer Finegold and the others at coming meetings. It is clear that our position had not only been confirmed but immeasurably strengthened.

—JENNY.

MUSTEISM AND STALINISM AT THE MINERS CONVENTION

CHRISTOPHER, ILL.

The St. Louis miners' convention ended after three days of deliberation. On the whole, the convention was a real rank and file gathering, with the ideological control in the hands of the Muste forces. In every major instance the convention carried into effect the line of the Musteites which was purely negative, evading the real fight and further disintegrating the fighting front of the coal miners.

The rôle of the official party representatives in the convention was very bad. After calling upon the miners not to send delegates to the convention, they finally entered it with their disruptive tactics, slandering, villifying and generally making a provocative attempt to get kicked out of the hall, which might have happened had it not been for our own clear-cut constructive spirit.

I foresaw the possibility of the Musteites taking the course they did. Many comrades misjudged or overestimated the real motives of Musteism. They were for a while (before the opening of the convention) impressed with the idea that the Musteites would unhesitatingly form a new union. The political line and achievements of the Musteites prove their total bankruptcy in leading the workers in militant struggles. There is a huge difference between what they say and what they do.

The convention had before it these four problems:

1. Clean out all the fakers within the ranks;
2. To build a class struggle industrial union;
3. The right for minorities to exist;
4. To lay the basis for the broadest possible unity of all rank and file miners, which naturally includes the West Virginia union, the Southwest union and the National Miners Union.

The Stalinists fought against this line of action. Dan Wainiger, the only delegate supporting the party, actually supported our position.

As to Howat, he gave us the same old thing. His Kansas boys, the revolutions in South America, Central America and Spain as great acts—without an analysis of the real forces at work in these revolutions or explaining that they were bourgeois revolutions. His political incompetence was further demonstrated by his failure to mention the Russian revolution. On these points, it should be acknowledged that Howat knows very little about the international situation and seems to have secured his information from capitalist newspaper headlines. In his address, he explained the refusal to join the N. M. U. forces because of having first to submit to the dictation of New York "coal miners". He said he sympathized with the N. M. U. program and knew that the best fighters of the coal miners were N. M. U. members. He did not satisfactorily explain his position in the "Reorganized" U. M. W. A. He merely said that he had been amazed that Walker, Germer, Nesbit, etc., did not consult him about the reorganizing movement's compromise with Lewis. This nearly made me fall off my seat with laughter. It is clear that Howat does not understand the scientific side of the labor movement at all and has served as a cover for the reactionaries in it.

I believe that we have accomplished results as a group within the coal miners' movement. Events will prove the correctness of our position and help us lay the foundations for the rejuvenation of a purer Communist movement in America along correct Marxian-Leninist lines.

As to future work, we hope to adopt a statement in our local union, expressing our view towards the convention, our desire to cooperate with the rank and file delegates of this convention and to push forward the work to realize the line of policy for which we fought so vigorously at St. Louis.

—GERRY ALLARD.

THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CARPENTERS' UNION

NEW YORK.—

Just as the unemployment situation becomes more acute, the aristocratic leadership of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America is riding its rank and file more determinedly to an abyss. The thirty percent who up till now were able to capture all the jobs in sight see the danger approaching when they hear the cries for the 6-hour day and 5-day week, division of work, etc.

The discrimination by the District Council against militants is no longer limited to individual members. Whole local unions

unless they blindly support the D. C., with the revocation of charters and destruction. Their boundaries are encroached upon by "loyal" D. C. members from other localities, and all sorts of bargains, many of them below the wage scale are struck with the bosses. The leaders have no desire to organize any more men, and the initiation fee has been raised to \$250.00 in the Metropolitan district, while the apprenticeship committee recently appointed by the Council is hard at work to limit, if not to abandon, the apprenticeship system altogether.

Still ignorant of their economic surroundings, the bulk of the men are still under the influence of the D. C. and they conceive the problem before them as one of selecting and limiting the organization to such a number as will not compel them to take up the question of reduction of hours, not to speak of organizing the vast army of unorganized carpenters.

This is to be done, of course, at the expense of the militant members, and secondly of the old members: the militants ceaselessly denounce the fakers for bargaining with the bosses, and therefore endanger the fakers' jobs; the old aged, of whom there are over 35,000, all within a few years of being eligible to their disability donation or death benefit of \$400.00, must be dealt with before they can receive the money.

And here is how it all happens: On account of their old age, they cannot get work, and without work they are unable to keep in good standing for any length of time, since this requires an annual fee of \$28.00. There are no provisions in our by-laws whereby they can receive job protection; not even the special privilege card (which allows them to work under the wage scale) will help them any longer because they find many of their younger brothers working on the jobs without the privilege cards, but under the scale and with the full knowledge and consent of the business agent and the D. C.

Take, for instance, our old age Pension Home, at Lakeland, Florida, where every member past the age of 65 who has been in good standing for 25 years, and is unfortunate enough to be unable to provide for himself, is entitled to go. It would seem that anyone with such a record would have the use of the home cheerfully granted him. But what are the facts? Only one out of every 500 members gets that chance, and how does he get there? First, he must be well recommended by his local officers to the General Executive Board (no further explanation needed!). His case will be investigated and the findings given to the Directing Board of the Home with recommendations. There again the machine is put into motion, and with several hundred other applicants in the race, he may and may not be notified to report for entry at the Home.

The march towards ruin of the U. B. C. J. A., with its 300,000 members is similar to that of the United Mine Workers, with a membership of 500,000 a few years ago, with the only exception that last summer Lewis bargained off to the bosses, on a five year term, one-fifth of his organization, out of about three sections of the whole United States. This is all that is necessary since most modern machines are operated to supply the market with coal on the basis of the 8-hour day and the old wage scale, leaving the other 400,000 members or ex-members of his organizations to the mercy of Coolidge's advice: Look for work in other industries. . . .

President Hutcheson aims, for next summer, to bargain his one-fifth of the members from all sections of the U. S. to the bosses, also on the 8-hour day basis and the present wage scale, with the "hope" that the other 240,000 members, under advice from Coolidge, will hunt for another industry and swell the army of the unemployed.

We say to these miners and to the carpenters, as well to the workers in the other industries: Don't let these labor fakers divide you into small groups and bargain some of you off while others of you are starving. Go to your meetings, find out what is wrong, and if any of the rank and file members makes an attack against the officers concerning grievances arising out of the job or the shop, stand by him, give him your support. Do not allow your officers to censor any correspondence to the local union, nor allow them to deny the floor to any delegation or committee from other organizations on any mission for which they seek the floor.

Aim and strive to eliminate all laws and rules which prevent the rank and file from criticizing the officers, or to discharge them when necessary for not serving the fullest interests of the membership.

If you find the industry on the bum, when we cannot get work, let us demand the 6-hour day without pay reduction, let us demand unemployment insurance at the expense of the owners of industry and guaranteed by the government. —W. H. H.

Letter of a Deported Oppositionist

A Muscovite has recently arrived in our midst. I communicate to you the essence of his remarks, even though, from all appearances the facts are a bit out of date and are known to you; he was incarcerated for some time before being exiled.

The capitulators are splitting up into numerous groups according to the particular phases of their decay. Radek is rotting away "individually" at an accelerated pace. Not only the rank and filers but also the capitulationist chiefs are doing all in their power to show that, from the point of view of personal and political relations, they have nothing in common with him. The most sincere say openly: "Radek has set himself the task of assuming a dirty and traitorous rôle." Some try to turn away the Radekists from the baser abominations. Radek is trying with all his strength to penetrate the governmental circles: he wants to have his inlets everywhere, and to be considered as one of their "men" (a "man" in the old Russian sense of the word). You know his "literary" works well enough for me not to have to expatiate upon them. I would like to tell you of a little characteristic fact of (how shall I say it mildly?) Radekist cynicism. Upon the request for aid to a deported and grievously ill Bolshevik, Radek refused and added: "He will return all the sooner." His methods are brief and foul.

We are all informed of the ideological demonstration of the capitulators. They see things through very dark spectacles and by that seek to find an excuse for themselves. The well-known capitulator P. said to a restricted circle: "The situation is hopeless. Everything is on the brink of the abyss. We will swing with you (that is, with the Bolshevik-Leninists) from the same lantern." One must deduce from this that he capitulated in order to aggravate the "hopeless" situation. It is true that, leaving his exile, Radek said the same thing. It is needless to add that we view the perspectives otherwise.

We have learned of a curious fact, regarding Preobrazhensky. Telling us about it, the new arrival guaranteed its authenticity with "his head". It happened before the Sixteenth Congress. Preobrazhensky thought that the resolution of the Central Committee on the exportation of grain (the large quantity of the exports) would lead to an acute and inevitable "civil war", etc., etc. . . . He wanted to come forward at the congress at all costs in order to warn against it.

"We must show as well as we can that we have returned to the party." The faction of the capitulators was seized with terror: they will expel again, they will exile, too. Pressure was exerted upon Preobrazhensky, and since he belongs to the "softies", he was dissuaded from it. This fact was held as a "rigorous" secret by the capitulators because they were afraid the "authorities" might learn of it, which would have been disastrous for their reputation, inconsistent enough without that. The rumor only became public recently.

To conclude with the capitulators, there remain only two words to say about the decrepit ancestors of all this small fry: Zinoviev and Kamenev. Both of them have finally passed over into the "academic" arena: Kamenev Zinoviev, in silence, the works of Herzen! Zinoviev has been named Rector of the University of Kazan; only illness prevented him from taking up his post. For a while, they wanted to entrust Kamenev with a diplomatic post (ambassador to London), but they changed their minds. That is how these people have "returned to the party".

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