

ON THE WORKERS' FRONT

Opposition Appeals To Milliners

We print below the principal extracts from a leaflet issued to the Left wing workers in the headgear market of New York by the fraction of the Communist League (Opposition).—Ed.

To All Militant Millinery Workers (Blockers, Operators, Trimmers, Cutters)

The growth and steady ascent of the Cloth-Hat-Cap and Milliner Worker International from the period of 1921 to 1927 had been checked by the reactionary hand of Mr. Zaritsky. The greatest gains for the union were recorded at until the "worthy President" per the 1927 convention and lasted only fecked the machinery for the coming betrayals of the millinery workers. The vicious campaign against the workers started with the ruthless leadership in every bit of militant domination as well as in New York. The President together with the G. E. B. succeeded in their planned campaign to undermine the strength of the New York Local 43, of Boston Local 7, of the Chicago Capmakers organization, etc., and came to the 1929 convention with greatly diminished forces and broken ranks. The elimination of the Left wing from active participation and leadership in the International meant the virtual destruction of working conditions in the cap and millinery shops. . . .

The millinery workers are becoming more and more convinced of the evil of the present policies and where they lead to; their hopes are in the Left wing. The dissatisfaction and ferment in the ranks of the millinery workers is deepening and found its expression recently in the opposition to the signing of the consolidated agreement. Had a well-organized, organized Left wing existed in the millinery trade at this time, our back door would pretty much shake in their back door deals with the bosses. A Left wing force which will be a challenge to the hand in glove work with the bosses must rise on the wave of the discontent of the broad masses of headwear workers. Therefore the task of the United Rank and File Committee at present is to rally all millinery workers ready and willing to fight against the present officialdom and its policies in Local 42 and 24, and regardless of their political opinion, solidify them into one compact force which would act as a militant group for the interests of the workers within the locals and the International.

To accomplish this task we must proceed immediately to the calling of a rank and file conference leaving the basis for a real broad representation of all rank and file millinery workers; to such a conference all workers called must be given the opportunity to express their view and opinions on how to conduct the struggle against the treachery of the officials. A narrow rank and file committee mechanically controlled will only shout phrases but will not succeed in rallying the millinery workers and directing their discontent into fighting channels, as recent experiences have taught us.

The call for the conference must contain a restatement of principles. Up till now the position of the U. R. F. C. has not been made sufficiently clear to every worker in the millinery trade. At the outset when the U. R. F. C. was constituted, the policy prevailing was to work under the direct supervision of the Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union with the aim in mind to break away from the Right wing controlled union as soon as "feasible", which would mean the breaking away of small and insignificant sections of the millinery workers and leaving the bulk of them at Zaritsky's mercies. Naturally we who helped hasten the movement of the U. R. F. C. and helped crystallize the sentiment against the collective agreement did not and could not subscribe to such a policy. At present the U. R. F. C. utterances do not mention at all its attitude towards the N. T. W. I. U. The present negative attitude is equally incorrect. We Left wingers cannot ignore the N. T. W. I. U. Fear of the R. F. C. to mention the N. T. W. I. U. and to take a positive stand is only misleading to the workers who should know our views and outlook to the Industrial Union.

It should be made clear that while we are building an opposition within the Right wing controlled union with the objective of changing the Right wing policy and with the aim in mind to transform the union into a fighting weapon of the workers, we at the same time do not deny our loyalty to the principles of the N. T. W. I. U. and industrial unionism and we will continue our struggles for such principles and will fight for and demand a united front with the N. T. W. I. U. in its work of organizing the unorganized as a step toward the eventual establishment of one industrial union for all needle trades workers

Nevertheless a great departure has been made by the U. R. F. C. from its original course and this makes it possible for all elements to find a basis for united work. We millinery workers, members of the Left Opposition, call upon the militant workers to rally to the support of the United Rank and File Committee. We must give ample and serious thought to the imperative need of united action of the Left wing in the task of preventing further betrayals by the Right wing administration in New York as well elsewhere.

all upon the U. R. F. C. to issue for a rank and file conference

which will establish unity of all genuine Left wing forces and consolidate into a strong factor that will fight against the reactionary policies of the Zaritskys in the locals and within the International. The demands of this conference should be:

- (a) immediate establishment of a bulletin system for the division of jobs, controlled by a committee of workers duly elected at local meetings; the jobs available and distributed should be publicly displayed for all workers in the union headquarters.
(b) Shop committees of all branches elected in the shop should be elected at regular shop meetings.
(c) exempt stamps and all union rights for unemployed millinery workers.
(d) no overtime should be permitted in any shop.
(e) abolition of temporary working cards.
(f) lowering of dues for those employed.
(g) unemployment insurance to be raised through a percentage paid in by the bosses.
(h) an immediate lowering of wages for the officialdom which would correspond with the average earnings of the millinery workers.
(i) an organization drive to abolish the sweat shop; this organization drive should be carried on by all millinery workers ready to serve the union and should be substituted for the reactionary proposal for a stoppage.

We propose the adoption by the Left wing of the slogan THE SIX HOUR DAY WITHOUT REDUCTION IN PAY, and as a union demand to be attained immediately the forty hour, five day week for all millinery workers—a burning necessity at this period of widespread economic crisis. A shorter week would insure more work for the unemployed and help check the undermining of union standards.

We call upon the United Rank and File Committee to adopt and act immediately upon these proposals.

For a united and effective Left wing in the millinery trade!

Millinery Workers, Members of the Communist League of America (Opposition)

Cleveland Party & Unemployment

On Friday the nineteenth there was an unemployment demonstration in Cleveland called by the party, in which we took part. Hardly a thousand participated. There were only three placards displayed in the whole rigmarole. And besides it was quite spiritless. Sam Don, the D. O., stood in command from behind. The demonstrators marched on the City Hall where they were allowed without any resistance whatsoever to enter, en masse, the city council chamber, where the city council men awaited them for a hearing. And here lies the crux of the matter.

The party has changed its slogans and its position on the question of unemployment. It no longer demands unemployment insurance—\$15 per week and an additional three for each dependent. Today it asks for relief (!) and it does not even specify how much. This brings it into conflict not with the capitalist class or its government, but with the charity organizations! As a matter of fact, the whole hearing, with the councilmen was devoted in the main to proving whether the charities were corrupt or not, whether they had denied food to this individual or not, whether they had given five dollars instead of nine. The unemployed council even produced, three cases to prove the graft of the charity organization. And the witnesses! Owners of houses, insurance policies, hundreds of dollars in grocery bills, and what not. The party has sunk into the worst kind of opportunism. Not unemployment insurance because that requires a difficult struggle—but the path of least resistance—only relief; it's easier to get, appears to be the attitude of the party. The whole unemployment struggle degenerates into whether the charities associate into what their relief in cash or in kind. And to make up for this kind of opportunism the party tells the workers in an adventurist braggadocio. "If they won't give us this relief we will go and take it." By the way, the police were completely conspicuous by their absence. Only three mounted cops were visible on the whole line of march; not a single cop in the city hall to be seen.

—GEORGE CLARKE.

Illinois Miners on the March

CHRISTOPHER, ILL. The new developments of the most outstanding significance in the Illinois mine fields can be enumerated as follows:

1. The sub-district convention of Franklin County adopted something like 104 resolutions pertaining to changes in the constitution. The preamble changes the notorious retreat of "an equitable share of what we produce" back to the fighting principle of "the full share of our product". Further, the convention changed the constitution to the effect that no official in the organization can succeed himself in office. Giving more power into the hands of the pit committees, and less power to joint group boards of conciliation

2. The present rank and file movement is the greatest and most effective uprising of the Illinois miners.

3. The honesty and devotion of the majority of the leaders that have sprung up in the course of this new turn cannot be doubted.

4. The movement is so drunk with rank and fleishism that no officials of the organization are allowed to address the miners.

5. The division of the rank and file miners since the Lewis-Fishwick fight was practically liquidated outside of a few important benches that invaded the conference for the purpose of causing confusion and spreading disorganization. However, the convention overwhelmed these tools and resolved to exterminate them from within the ranks.

The convention call sent out to every local union in the state is of great importance. The convention will have much work to realize as a real miners' convention has not been in effect since the old pre-war days. The sub-district convention of Franklin county was very much alive with discussion and fire from the delegates. The convention deliberated over 12 days, adopted over 200 resolutions and did other things to perfect its organizational machinery.

The greatest danger before the rank and file miners at the present time is the fact that the Illinois movement can be converted into a tail of Lewis and Cook. The Lewis machine as a whole. There has been hesitation on the part of some of the leaders to come out

straightforwardly in opposition to Lewis as well. They have taken refuge under phrases like "I am willing to do what the rank and file want to do." Yet at the same time, they refrain from boldly attacking Lewis. They are most militant in opposition to the district officialdom led by Walker. The miners must organize themselves so strongly that any leading individual will be instantly crushed when he pulls anything to divert the rank and file movement from its proper course.

I know that the rank and file will not "save" the U. M. W. A. I know that Lewis is determined to go down the line with the union under his arm if it means its destruction. But the time is not far off when the West Virginia miners' union, the Illinois rank and file movement, the National Miners Union, and other groups throughout the country will constitute the material that will form a powerful miners' industrial union. This objective is the only way out.

—GERRY ALLARD.

(Other miners' news on page one)

THE SECOND CONVENTION OF THE C. L. A. (OPPOSITION)

During the latter part of the Winter months we expected to set the first week in July as a tentative date for the second national conference of the Communist League of America (Opposition). The final date of course must be conditioned upon the publication of our theses of future perspectives and tasks. These are now practically completed and being sent to the non-resident N. E. C. the exact date together with the various minutes. We expect their publication as a special supplement to the issue of the Militant dated July 18.

There will then follow a two-months period for discussion of the issues raised, to be conducted in the columns of the Militant. We are therefore orienting upon a final conference date of about September 15. However, the official call which is to be issued very soon will specify the exact date, together with the various regulations for the conference.

Where Does British Labor Stand?

By the thesis of the Eleventh Comintern Plenum we are informed that the growing contrasts between the systems of Soviet economy and capitalist economy is the "kernel of contemporary international relations". Without for one moment overlooking this growing contrast, it is necessary to observe the "slight" error of estimate made by the authors. The kernel of contemporary international relations is not yet this growing contrast. No, this kernel is still to be found in the increasingly furious contest between the main imperialist powers for hegemony of the world market.—More precisely the rivalry between the United States and England.

Both of these powers are in the throes of the deep-going capitalist world crisis. The unbridled expansion of American imperialism is already forcing England to the wall. In actual practice it is now being demonstrated that the former, in order to overcome its economic difficulties will proceed yet more ruthlessly further to establish and maintain its world hegemony against Europe, and particularly, against its main competitor—England. It is in this sphere that the most gigantic conflict yet is being prepared. New wars and revolutions which will shake the world to its foundation. The storm clouds are gathering and moving with ever increasing velocity. This which has been assigned only secondary place in the Eleventh Comintern Plenum thesis, is the "kernel of contemporary international relations."

Maneuvering for position through economic and diplomatic means has so far characterized the contest between these two powers; that is, with a few engineered revolutions thrown in for good measure. All a prelude to the continuation which will take the form of open warfare. The five power naval conference seemingly hung the shield of a diplomatic victory on the chest of the grotesque British premier; but in reality American imperialism carried off the laurels of victory. It will soon stand out much more clearly to what extent the results of this conference means a settlement of naval supremacy in favor of the power with the strongest industrial resources. American Imperialism for Disarmament —in Europe

Such land armaments, of course, do not merely involve the question of soldiers, of standing army, but of the whole war machinery, of implements, of air fleets etc. Thus we see in the field of land armaments similarly the economic pressure by American imperialism for a settlement in favor of the power with the greatest industrial resources. The "Armaments Year Book" of the League of Nations reports the sums laid out for military and naval expenditures in 1928-1929 by the principal powers to be:

Table with 2 columns: Country, Amount. United States: \$772,984,000. Great Britain: \$550,080,000. France: \$357,556,000.

We may rest assured that American imperialism will fully utilize this opportunity and swing its economic whip to reduce the armaments particularly of its nearest rival and secure its own supremacy unchallenged. Such are its preparations for the conflict. It will also be another step toward more definitely putting the European nations on rations. While these undoubtedly are the perspectives of American imperialism there remains still the American working class to be heard from.

The Essential Question of Destiny of England

What is the position of England in this conflict? It is showing the signs of a declining empire. It has fallen to third place as a world exporting power. Inch by inch it is being forced further to the wall by its most overwhelming competitor the United States. Her dominating empire is shaken by the growing differentiation of interests of each separate part. In the colonies, serious revolutionary movements are developing. Thus, now that the sun is actually beginning to set over her imperial domain it coincides with her advance toward a revolutionary situation. The question of the greatest importance, however, is the one of the readiness of the working class for such a situation; and above all the question put by Comrade Trotsky in his book "Whither England?":

"Will it be possible to organize a Communist party in England, which shall be strong enough and which shall have sufficiently large masses behind it, to enable it, at the psychological moment to carry out the necessary political conclusion of this ever sharpening crisis? This question involves the entire destiny of England."

Where is the Proletarian Vanguard? In the Dec. 1923 parliamentary elections, coming right upon the heels of the defeat of the German revolution and the American intervention for reestablishing German capitalism, the British Communist Party polled 53,000 votes to the Labor party's 4,350,000. By the 1928 elections the relationship of votes were 50,000 to 8,000,000 respectively. Thus, if parliamentary elections register anything, this intervening period registered a victory of reformism over Communism,

and that during a period of heavily growing unemployment. During the general strike year the C. P. membership reached its highest membership, about 12,000. It was a force within the trade unions and to an extent within the labor party, despite expulsion barriers. The Minority Movement was supposed to have a following of close to a million; but alas, the fatal weakness: it was mainly based upon the "prestige" of the "Left" gentlemen of the type of Purcell Hicks and Cook. The party weekly organ reached a circulation of about 70,000 and the Minority Movement weekly organ about 110,000. Today the party finds itself rigorously reduced to a position of serious isolation, its daily organ not reaching much above a 3,000 circulation. The Minority Movement has become a skeleton organization of the party without any serious influence. The Communist vanguard has so far remained unable to draw upon the great and growing resources of working class disillusionment with the MacDonald labor government.

While we shall reserve an attempt to make an analysis of this specific situation until a later article, it is necessary to bear in mind, when looking at this contrast of the past with the present, the disastrous policy of the Anglo-Russian Unity Committee. From this the British Communist Party has not learned one single lesson. As a matter of fact by its bureaucratic leadership of Stalinist faction agents, the membership has been prevented from making any such attempt. Thus the heritage of this false policy, while remaining uncondemned and uncorrected, today still weighs like an albatross upon the party. And surely a fundamental change of orientation, of policy and of tactics is necessary before the Communist party will be able to play a serious leading role in the coming struggles now being inexorably prepared by the developments of England's crisis—not to speak of the coming revolutionary situation.

MacDonald Preparing the Road Meanwhile the road of England heading directly toward new serious class battles is clearly discernible. The situation is being described by her leading industrialists as one of "unrelieved gloom". But statements by them are, of course, not in the least concerned with the terrible pauperization and squalor of the working class. There is a growing demand from the financial interests for a complete overhauling of the industrial machinery. But right there the demand strikes a snag which with this gentry, finds its formula: "England is living on a higher standard than her continental neighbors".

Naturally this is not to be interpreted as having any reference to the standard of the capitalist masters and hence all efforts are aimed at reducing the working class standard of living. Throughout England there is a systematic heavy wage slashing now carried into almost

every industry. The workers to be sure having registered a growing dissatisfaction and increased attempts at resistance but they have not yet taken the form of a consciously prepared defensive. In the wage slashing campaign a definite role has been assigned to the MacDonald government. Prior to its taking over the reins for his majesty, these Labor party politicians were rather unsparing in their demands for capital investments for expansion of British industry. Usually, this followed with a veiled "threat" that if capitalism could not run industry, the workers would. Not that this was intended for the ears of the workers and for them to carry out the practical conclusions therefrom. Far from that. It was intended as a pressure upon capitalism. And today history is drawing the conclusion for MacDonald and his colleagues. It flows inevitably from their position as his majesty's ministers, as lieutenants of capitalism of the most miserable but also most cunningly treacherous social reformist stripe. Theirs is now the particular task, no longer of mouthing phrases about workers running industry, but of applying the instruments of capitalist state coercion to reduce the workers' standard of living; to assure the basis for rationalization and further exploitation. That it is precisely also the labor government which is assigned the task of making preparations for the coming imperialist conflict—disguised under peace palavers—coincides with its position.

But the plans of the capitalist masters of England including the specific tasks assigned to the Labor government, have not yet fully materialized. Thus, despite the menacing clouds which now so frequently threaten the much cherished jobs of these royal ministers they will, barring unforeseen developments, still be able to hang on for some time. But that will make possible the further completion of the process of disillusionment and make the break more decisive. It will make the coming class battles more decisive also. Yet the all important question remains the clarity and definiteness of working class direction. Will the Communist forces be able to lead?

—ARNE SWABECK.

Note: This is the first of a series of articles on the present situation in England and the tasks of the Communists. A second installment will appear in the next issue.—Ed.)

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The Unemployment Councils at Work

In a more than a year the party has not developed out of the rank and file of its unemployed councils a single leader of even secondary caliber, certainly not one of real stature. To expect the latter is to ask the mouse to bring forth a mountain. But the mountain has brought forth mice in plenty. The party has developed in the apparatus of its unemployed councils a host of little functionaries, petty careerists, badly trained ideologically and politically. It is enough to participate in one or two demonstrations, play a more or less prominent role, subscribe without reservations to the party line, obey orders, heap abuse and slander on the "renegades"—to be assured of some little position in the apparatus and sit on the platform when Foster debates Muste.

Originally, too, the party can show only a minus for its unemployment work. The unemployed councils are largely paper organizations. Workers joined, attended a demonstration or two, listened to general demands unconnected with their local, most immediate needs and drifted away. Or their attendance at best, even now is irregular. This is due to the fact that they have been recruited from the breadlines and must arrange their time by that of the breadlines or other relief agencies at large distances from their homes. This source of the councils' membership explains why there are almost no working class women and children in them.

Because of this floating membership and irregular attendance, it is necessary to hold business meetings every day to organize each day's work. It is impossible to organize the details of work more than one day in advance. A worker who will distribute leaflets on Monday cannot be counted on in advance to do it again on Tuesday, Wednesday, etc. This applies as well to party members assigned to the councils, who are frequently shifted about from one council to another council or party organization or activity. This day-to-day organization of each day's business results in a terrible monotony of mechanical business routine. More hours are spent each day in indoor business meetings than in actual work. This further discourages the workers from attending the meetings regularly.

The floating membership and irregular attendance make it necessary for a small group, usually party members and apparatus functionaries, to carry on the work. Small as it is, the work is too much for the working nucleus, who protest and complain about the inactivity of the membership. This results in sporadic "discussions", futile, paper plans to activate the general memberships and in a deepening chasm between the "active" and the "inactive" members.

A general looseness pervades the inner organizational work of the councils. Motions are passed and promptly forgotten. A motion initiating socialist competition among the councils in their organization of tenant's leagues, is passed unanimously by an executive body and never heard about again. Motions calling for reports on finances, on the sale of literature, etc., are passed and result in nothing. Committees and delegations are elected, do not work, make no reports and are not brought to account. Small sums are continuously stolen by unemployed workers. Efforts at elementary workers' education are as irregular as the attendance of the rank and file. A course in public speaking by Brodsky is dropped when half completed without explanation given or demanded. The ideological level of the "education" is unbelievably low. Thus Johnstone on the unemployment program of the I. W. W.: "The program of the Trotskyists, as I will show, differs only by a hair's breadth from the program of the I. W. W."

The external activities of the councils suffer from the same looseness. The distribution of leaflets is unsystematic and hap-hazard. Some workers throw them away. What tenants' league work is done is equally unsystematic and hap-hazard. Meetings with house committees are not followed up. No minutes of these meetings are kept. No further steps are taken to spread the organization to neighboring houses. In restoring the furniture of evicted workers, the council proceeds to the scene of the eviction without leadership, etc., etc.

No adequate technique has been devised for fighting evictions. The procedure in vogue at present can be compared only to fire fighting. An eviction is reported to a council. The council is mobilized and proceeds to the scene. If it outnumbers the police ten to one the furniture is restored. Obviously this is a ridiculous procedure. Should the councils be able, from the point of view of time, numbers and other factors—which they are not—to restore the furniture of every evicted worker, they would be evicted to a society for restoring evicted furniture. But in that case, the police and the municipal governments would be more than equal to the problem. Their organization is as yet stronger, more mobile, better disciplined and trained. In New York City, one or two patrolmen in a position to summon more, are stationed at the scene of every eviction in the neighborhoods where the councils are known to function.

—THOMAS STAMM.