

DISCUSSION ARTICLES

The Double Task of the Left Opposition

When the present Left Opposition were still members of the American party, the presentation of a thesis by the Executive Committee always brought out fundamental differences between the embryo three currents, which were more than mere tactical questions or questions of formulations. The difference may have started on tactical questions formulations, but only the blind could not see the deep channels these questions led to. The break-up into three currents is a proof of this. Our thesis presented for discussion gives a Marxian analysis of conditions and in the main is correct. I think our group, not through bureaucratic suppression but through Marxian understanding is the closest knit group of our faction. Because we hold such an unanimous position on the main theoretical questions and don't have to "waste time" on these issues, we should devote a greater amount of time and discussion on the concretization of our international position for America. Therefore, for this purpose, I raise some tactical questions and questions of formulation of the thesis.

wrong action or no action, and where we are able to carry out our Marxian position and are unable to impress the Centrists we must take the initiative and lead, forcing the party into activity and directing the class battles. The more pressure we can bring against the Centrist bureaucrats the more will the program of the Left Opposition become the program of the C. I. But the correct function of our forces, in the party, supporting the party as expelled members and in direct leadership where they fail or are incapable—is the way to increase the pressure of the Left, the party members and the class against the Stalin bureaucrats.

Where the party is leading a struggle or engaged in activity, it is our duty to support them, first with Marxian criticism of their strategy and tactics and second with all the activity possible. This is not tail-endism, if this kind of activity is coordinated with the other

The Party and the Opposition's Tasks

(Continued from Last Issue)

5. The Southern textile industries, the next field upon which the party mobilized its organizational forces, was, in a fashion demonstrative of all the reasons for the whole crop of party failures. Here they entered upon a virgin field, where the most elementary class manifestations were just beginning to show themselves, only to begin by raising all sorts of unapplicable slogans (Communists have long been taught that the raising of slogans for struggle must be conditioned upon the needs and understanding of the masses involved). In addition to raising unrealistic slogans, every type and kind of hedge-podge adventurism from Johnstone's "two color unions", to Dunne's "right of self defense", to Reed's cowardly desertion was indulged in. The first real test of struggle showed a number of desertions and manifestations of sheer cowardice on the part of a number of party leaders. This coupled with splendid capacities of struggle and sacrifice on the part of the workers generally as well as on the part of some of the younger party functionaries. The result of this whole campaign is that the party's much boasted "penetration of the South" has resulted in turning the movement in this region back for quite some time.

6. The unemployed crises following upon a period of decline of organized labor resistance was immediately greeted by the party with a central slogan (incorrectly formulated at that time) "Work or Wages". The advocacy of a line of action which posed no less a question than the "capture of the streets" and "open struggles with the police." This whole movement started off with a splendid demonstration on March 6, 1930, involving some few hundred thousand workers in the leading industrial cities. At these gatherings, party spokesmen raised slogans all of which were beyond the comprehension of a class on the downward path of resistance. Now after many months have passed with the definite lessons of unemployment and the general attack on living and wage standards having implanted their lessons upon the workers, an upswing of resistance is being more and more manifested. The party has reduced its whole campaign to the collection of signatures for petitions asking a bourgeois Congress to grant unemployed insurance. The absolute failure in the midst of favorable conditions to get any response to the calls for mobilization into "hunger marches" is sufficient answer to the party's loss of prestige amongst the unemployed.

The present crisis carries with it definite signs of thorough-going reshaping of the relations of classes which opens wide the question of the immediate role of the revolutionary movement. The party under Centrist leadership has failed in a proper evaluation of objective conditions. There is no reason to believe that the application of the reactionary concepts of "Socialism in one country" posed by the international bureaucracy will release its deadening hands from the revolutionary movements of the world. If we are to accept comrade Trotsky's analysis that the three tendencies in the Communist movement are not just tactical formulations but basic principles representing class departures, the conclusion forced upon us is that the Left Opposition represents the proletarian approach in the movement. The American Communist Party cannot any longer be classified as even possessing the potentialities of a "mass

phase I refer to, and that is—where the party fails to act and leaves the field open to the reformers and syndicalists it is our duty as Communists and particularly as Left Oppositionists, to fill the gaps left by the Centrists.

One can answer that our forces are too small, we will be lost in mass work, etc., etc. I am not calling for mass work of the Weisbord type. The wrong theoretical position puts Centristism in a position where they are incapable of carrying out many tasks Communists must. Our forces are too limited numerically to carry them out, even though we have a position and understanding of the needs and road to follow. Such, on our part, is a good "excuse" for not finishing the activity but it is no excuse for not starting such activity. The Bolshevik party in Russia by itself could not complete the revolution, neither can the Left Opposition by itself complete tasks in America which we are compelled to take up because the theoretical position, which causes wrong tactics and strategy of the Centrists, renders them incapable of taking up. Our Communist duty is this two-fold activity to properly support the party and the Third International.

—HUGO OEHLER.

party" in the face of its miserable failures in all fields. The base of its possible expansion instead of increasing is constantly shrinking. And if our evaluation of the basic currents within the American movement are correct then we can draw but one logical conclusion. The role of the Opposition must be that of training a cadre of well-equipped revolutionists who, in the coming developments will find the road of forging the basis of a real Communist party worthy of the name of vanguard of the working class. The example of the Bolsheviks who from 1903 to 1917 carried on and initiated independent activities, though formally a faction of the Russian social democracy, can well be accepted as a model for the immediate transitory period. The American Opposition, taking a stand of real leadership in the coming sharp struggles of the working class, will bring to our banner the many good revolutionary and Communist elements who have been driven away from the party by its opportunist policies. The task of the Opposition is boldly to pose and lead the way. There will be more gained by correct principle evaluations of objective work applied in Leninist fashion towards influencing the worth while proletarian elements who through sheer inertia are still left in the party than a score of disjointed participation in spontaneous struggles.

The road of the Opposition must be that of political leadership in the developing class struggle. The question of size and technical equipment can and will be overcome by healthy growth which is bound to result from the acceptance of real tasks. Size never daunted Lenin. Intransigence in principle applied as a living force, and developing with it, is the surest road of Communist growth. A faction of the party—yes, a living faction, stealing the iron of revolutionary will on the touchstone of struggles—that should and can be the immediate role of the Left Opposition in America, and internationally.

Revolutionary formulations coupled with defensive practices Lenin called the worst poison to inject into the body of the movement. It has been the lot of all consistent revolutionary groups to be accused of "impatience, syndicalist tendencies, Leftism, etc." If absolute faith in the abilities of the workers to develop along the course of revolutionary decisions will be sneered at by men of little faith, that should be a double sign of the soundness of our course.

The example of Lenin who, upon his return to Russia in the April days, upon finding that even his close associates (built up through years of common struggle) were showing signs of weakness in the face of decisions which implied sharp departures from the past was ready to go alone if necessary. This should always remain a living guide in the making of all decisions by the Opposition. "From the past we learn only how to act in the future, not to see possible failure but probable victory." (Lenin). The Opposition will maintain real Marxian unity at only one price. Intransigence of principle tested in the living fires of application in the class struggle.

The course of our National Committee up to now has been one conditioned by a constant looking back and taking stock of limitations. That was after a fashion imposed upon us as a result of our historical genesis. Real growth of a revolutionary scope must be conditioned by a constant daring to scale ever greater and greater tasks.

One task posed before us must be that of a systematic examination of our composition. Is it healthy in the main, or is it not a fact that predominantly it is composed of elements who have not any direct contact with currents of workers in basic industries where the possibilities of real struggles in the future lie? The only real basis of political contact must be built up out of elements prepared to assume the task of establishing contacts in these industries. Systematic colonization, conditioned upon a membership prepared to assume new tasks involving a break with fixed relations, is the one road of Communist work. We have a young group who are well qualified to assume these tasks, yet up to now nothing has been done to utilize them. We must use our material with a full understanding that with our present perspectives there is only one road—the ability to fit and develop within the movement of the

working class—any elements coming into the movement with ties and considerations of a personal nature superseding the interest of the movement are totally unfit for membership. Systematic efforts should be made to fit the whole membership into contacts that will enable us to get a two-ply benefit. One: establish real influence with workers in the every day struggle. And secondly, obtain some badly needed seasoning for our membership. The job of publishing the basic theoretical material, the lack of which in the past was responsible for most of the ills in the movement unquestionably has been an immeasurable achievement. Part of the present limited resources of the League should be utilized to send out qualified organizers to establish contacts with elements close to us who are at present dispersed.

Our woeful lack of resources in the face of pressing situations, such as occurred in Southern Illinois a few months ago implies the pressing need of furnishing the National Office with a special organizational fund which will enable us to respond organizationally in the future in such emergencies. Manifestations such as the Duluth Longshoreman's strike described by F. in the Militant of June the 21, show the absolute need of our ability to send capable organizers into favorable fields. Duluth will repeat themselves with greater frequency as the bankruptcy of Stalinism will show itself just as glaringly in the future.

The splendid example of launching our first weekly Militant in the face of almost insurmountable obstacles and achieving success bids fair to remain an example of fine revolutionary initiative that should point the road that the American Opposition must follow in facing all future problems. Let us honestly take stock of our past work, modestly appraise our achievements, and face the future with real Communist confidence in each other. The tasks of the Opposition are large, and cannot be faced until we have built up absolute confidence in our ranks. That can only be done by a real Leninist criticism motivated by an examination of realities, and not empty abstractions.

—S. M. ROSE.

Dizziness... from Failure

The crisis that has afflicted the United States has also been agitating the printers the last two years. For a long time the officers of "Big Six" (New York Typographical Union) have been successful in side-tracking the issue by telling the membership that there is no unemployment in the printing trade. When confronted with the question of some unemployed member as to why he could not get a job, he was told that if he is a printer he should be able to get a job. But not for long were they successful in sidetracking the issue. They had to recognize, under pressure of course, that there is a problem of unemployment. Different proposals were made and some of them carried, but were of little avail. The situation became very serious last winter and a proposal was made to force the newspaper men to work only five days a week and give the sixth day to a "sub" and tax the job and book men four percent, in order to be able to pay twenty dollars a week to the unemployed. Everybody, of course, expected of the "Amalgamationists"—as the champions of the cause of the unemployed—no other course but to support this proposition. How shocked were the unemployed "Amalgamationists" when they heard that the Amalgamation party had distributed a handbill appealing to the members of "Big Six" to defeat the proposition. The disastrous result of such a policy was the miserable showing at the election in May of the Amalgamation party, the candidate for president polling 400 votes of a total of 9,000 votes cast, whereas a few years ago, the candidate of the Amalgamation party got 2,600 votes out of a total of 8,000 votes cast.

Lately, I heard some rumors about the leadership having gotten a dose of "self-criticism", and this was declared to be a mistake. As has been shown subsequently, this report was incorrect. They are not to blame. Their teacher too, when he gets dizzy from failures, also calls them successes.

The above-mentioned tax expired at the end of July and, contrary to the expectations of some of the sponsors of the proposition, conditions are getting worse. A new tax was again recommended and as the previous tax did not cover the payments, and anticipating the worsening of conditions of unemployment, it was raised to six percent for the next ten weeks. Here was an opportunity for the "Amalgamation" party to correct their mistake. But lo and behold! Again a clever move. A handbill was again distributed by the Amalgamationists with the very snappy "catchline": "Defeat the wage cut referendum", thereby giving the most conservative element of the union a moral justification to vote against it. To show how the unemployed, the section of the workers where the Amalgamationists should look for support, voted on this proposition, I shall quote the returns of the secretary's chapel (chapel of the unemployed): for the proposition, 354, against 4.

The reason given by the "Amalgamationists" was, "If we defeat this proposition, the union will be forced to call a strike".

If there is a limit to stupidity, this is it.

—A PRINTER.

In the I.A.C.W.A.

Cliques Gird for Spoils

Clique fights and rivalry for jobs and control in the New York Amalgamated Clothing Workers organization are a matter of routine. The specific conditions in the clothing industry and the existing craft divisions that are a product of conditions that prevailed in the past and are a vestige of the old defunct United Garment Workers Union, foster these evils. Graft, corruption and demoralization permeate the organization from the very top to the lowest layers, embracing wide sections of the membership.

The specific conditions of the industry are the decentralized system of manufacture and contracting. The difficulties of control of widely scattered manufacturing units under a contracting system can only be overcome by a centralized industrial organization under democratic control. But the craft divisions are carefully guarded by the local officials who are not at all ready to give up their positions. Some locals, especially those in strategic positions, are firmly entrenched and dictate terms to the rest in the organization. Hillman has long failed in his attempts to subdue these recalcitrant local chiefs to his domination. He is now playing his game according to the formula: divide and rule, throwing one set of officials against the other by means of bribery with jobs. He has even created jobs outside the union organization for those of his favorites who failed in the game. These "unfortunates" are placed in the auxiliaries of the A. C. W. organization—the banks, cooperative houses unemployment insurance offices which are under Hillman's direct control.

In all these machinations of the officials the members are used as pawns, their ignorance and prejudices being exploited to create confusion and demoralization.

Hillman-Beckerman Struggle

An outstanding example of the devastating effect this condition has brought to the organization is the situation that has now developed on the basis of the conflict between Hillman and the Beckerman-Orlofsky clique, a situation that is pregnant with grave consequences for the whole organization. Hillman has for years allowed and even rendered support to a reign of terror and racketeering in the Cutters Local as a price for the services the Orlofsky-Beckerman gang furnished him in subjugating the tailors to the yoke of the piece-work and speed-up system. Today, these officials are a hindrance to Hillman's rule, their policies being in direct conflict with the trend those of Hillman have taken in recent years due to developments in the New York market.

The most important problem of the organization today is the unionization of the out-of-town shops that have succeeded in establishing themselves and are undermining the union conditions in New York with the aid of racketeers and gangsters who have found a strong base for their activities in the key locals of the organizations, like the Cutters' and Expressmen locals. Hillman's cry of racketeering is an echo of his campaign against the Left wing in the New York organization, when he pulled the doors wide open for these underworld people who are today menacing his domination. The chiefs of these locals are now accused by Hillman (not publicly but in an underworld fashion) of interfering with his unionization campaigns and of complicity with the racketeers in the industry of pursuing their personal ends under the pretense of safeguarding the jobs of the cutters. They are charged with permitting cut garments to be shipped to non-union shops to be made up there in defiance of the rules of the organization. Presumably, Orlofsky and his gang are concerned with their own racket and resent Hillman's encroachment upon their private territory.

While Hillman is "solving" the out-of-town problem by granting out-of-town scab firms "A. C. W. agreements" for the mere price of a dues collecting, check-off system, Orlofsky is anxious to save his racket which is threatened by the exodus of the shops into the country places prompted by such a policy. Orlofsky as a local chief is orientated on New York, while Hillman's movements are unfettered.

Clique Conflicts in the Strike

These conflicting interests between Hillman and Orlofsky have been reflected in the last strike where one side has sabotaged on the other.

The following instance presents a glaring illustration: The shops in the South Jersey towns, like Vineland, Hammonton and Egg Harbor, were stopped off for only one day and then the workers were sent back under a union agreement, while these shops have been directly maintained by manufacturers from New York for the purpose of getting their garments made

cheaper. The wages paid in those shops average \$10 per week. Thousands of workers are employed there under sweatshop conditions. These workers resisted the strike call, because they had nothing to benefit by a walkout, and they feared that Hillman's promise to the New York workers to bring back the bundles to New York might be carried out and result in the loss of their jobs. Hillman, however did not carry out his promise, and many cutting rooms were shut down in New York because of the above out-of-town shops having swallowed up their work.

In retaliation, the cutters' officials have held back their cooperation in the strike and manifestly sabotaged it in a number of cases where cutting rooms are operated in full force with the local not interfering even to the extent of placing pickets there.

The pledges of support and cooperation of the officials of the various branches in the strike appear, in the face of what is really happening, to be mere lip service. Each is concerned with his personal interests and is looking for his ends in this strike. The consequences of this situation are bound to be disastrous for the conditions of the workers. This orgy of sabotage and betrayal is proceeding with full speed behind the backs of the workers, and the workers will pay the penalty for their inactivity.

Towards a Split

The fight between the cliques in the A. C. W. organization must inevitably result in a split between the Cutters' Union and the New York Joint Board and the ruin of the last vestiges of union conditions for cutters and tailors in New York shops. To prevent such disaster is the duty of the Left wing movement in the A. C. W.

Unity of the tailors and cutters must be made the central slogan of the Rank and File movement. The attempts at splitting the organizations to insure domination are clearly manifest in the maneuvers of the Hillman and Orlofsky cliques. If a split occurs, both cliques will justify it and each, under the pretense of saving the union, will widen the breach and bring more demoralization in the ranks of the membership. The Left wing must throw in its forces to launch a campaign to unite the rank and file of the cutters and tailors branches for the struggle against the maneuvers of their officials.

The Rank and File Committee must also give serious attention to the out-of-town situation. The out-of-town shops must be organized simultaneously with those of New York. The Rank and File Committee cannot directly undertake this work because it is by its very nature limited to work in shops controlled by the A. C. W. But this work can and should be undertaken by the N. T. W. I. U. The workers in the out-of-town shops should be approached with a message of genuine unionism in opposition to the fake unionism of Hillman and Company.

In addition to these two tasks the Rank and File Committee must make clear its policy to the A. C. W. membership. The effects of the past mistakes of the Left wing have not yet been obliterated in the minds of the masses. But those mistakes have never been made clear to the workers and there is even a great deal of confusion still left in the minds of Left wingers. This condition greatly hinders the development of the movement. It can be removed by an honest and frank discussion of past and present policies.

With a program adapted to solve the vital problems of the industry, and a correct policy the Left wing, in close cooperation with the N. T. W. I. U., will be enabled to undertake successfully the launching of a broad mass movement to defeat the Hillman machine in the New York organization and lay the foundation for revolutionary industrial unionism among the men's clothing workers.

—ALBERT ORLAND.

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