

WORKERS
OF THE
WORLD.
UNITE

THE MILITANT



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Reply of the Steel Workers

Preparations to Resist Wage Cuts on the Order of the Day

It has already been amply demonstrated that the 10 percent wage cut decided upon by the board of directors of the United States Steel corporation, affecting about 220,000 workers on Oct. 1, became the signal to a whole series of wage cuts for a number of the biggest industrial concerns, such as the General Motors, the United States Rubber Co., the Colorado Fuel and Iron Co., the B. F. Goodrich Co., the Northern Pacific Railroad, the biggest Arizona copper companies, several New England textile concerns and the other major steel corporations. Similarly the reaction of the steel workers to this slashing of their standard will in many respects be determining for the working class as a whole.

Wages and Living Costs
By Ethelbert Stewart, the United States Commissioner of Labor Statistics, we are informed that since December 1925, up to the period of the basic figure of 100 both for cost of living of the American workman and for total payroll in manufacturing industry, when compared to June 1931, there has been a total drop of only 15 per cent in the cost of living but of 40 per cent in the total payroll. These are telling figures. The total payroll, of course, includes in this case the present heavy unemployment. But that is precisely the biggest curse of capitalist society today. When one adds to this the drab prospect of much more deep-going wage slashes, as already haughtily proclaimed by the barons of finance and industry, the outlook for the working class indeed becomes one fraught with sinister import.

To what extent and how effectively can the steel workers take up a serious resistance to these attacks? For the moment this is quite a crucial question. What the attitude is of the American Federation of Labor leadership and what can be expected from them we have so often pointed out in these columns. Throughout the whole present period of wage cutting, the bombastic statements by Green and other A. F. of L. officials about "standing like the rock of Gibraltar against wage cuts", are just so much empty chatter. It is not associated with an appeal to the workers and preparations for their resistance; and such could not be expected from imperialist agents. Their empty proclamations to organize the automobile industry and the Southern textile field were not even worth the paper they were written on. Now they address themselves to the employers saying that wage cuts will not help the recovery of industry. But, it is, of course, a well known fact that the employers' aim is to unload the whole burden of the crisis upon the backs of the workers as a means of facilitating an industrial recovery. Hence the wage cuts.

The steel workers cannot look for any leadership or assistance from the A. F. of L. The difficulties in their way are indeed great. Herded into their miserable hovels, working and living under the most brutal industrial and political oppression, with armies of privately owned police and a complete spy system watching their every move within the plants and within the company owned cities in which they live, only the greatest power of solidarity and consciously planned militant organization can batter down such walls. It is a well-known fact that the steel barons have already before this wage cut announcement taken all possible precaution to forestall effective resistance. Undoubtedly they even have their spy system busily engaged not only in attempting to prevent any sign of organization but also to provoke abortive actions which can easily be defeated.

Past Experiences
The steel industry is rich in experiences of spontaneous strikes on a local scale arising out of grievances, of special conditions, within single plants. Though entirely unorganized, many such strikes have been successfully won by the workers. But the industry is also rich in experiences of strikes of a national character around issues of national importance "won" by the employers. The powers of the steel trust are as mighty today as before. The forces of state suppression and the private armies of police and gunmen are as much at their disposal as ever. But today we also have all the potentialities of a coming new wave of rising resistance of the working class in face of which the power of the mightiest trusts might be reduced to rather small proportions. In this lies real hope for the present.

It will be recalled that during the time of the mighty wave of organization of the steel workers in 1919, the labor movement as a whole was experiencing an upward curve. A growth of organization and a growth of militancy. So much so, that the reactionary A. F. of L. leaders found themselves compelled to engage in this campaign of organization and strike. That they did it reluctantly is true. That they used every opportunity for betrayal is equally true. Nevertheless there was an almost irresistible sweep of organization and struggle. And yet the steel trust, aided by these factors mentioned, "won" the battle and since crushed practically all remnants of union organization.

Today, the possibilities for dissension, division and betrayal of these imperialist agents are lessened. The possibilities for Communists and militants as a

real factor in leadership of organization and resistance are much greater. These become two additional positive points of real value in favor of the steel workers. We are again facing an issue of national proportions and importance—a wage slashing throughout the industry. But the steel workers as yet remain practically without any trace of organization or actual preparation for struggle.

In face of this situation serious-minded revolutionists can look upon with deep apprehension upon the attitude of the official party leaders proclaiming, and apparently pushing forward for local strikes against the present wage cut, expecting them, as stated by Foster, to "spread like wildfire". This is not the method or tactic to pursue. Local strikes in face of this national issue carry all the dangers of becoming abortive of facilitating isolation of the most militant sections to become easily crushed as a means of administering decisive defeats before the main forces can be collected; before any adequate preparations and organization can be accomplished.

Unquestionably the wage cut in the steel industry can become a real incentive toward organization. That itself is the main task. Amongst revolutionists there should be no dispute about that. Organization in preparations for a nationwide strike should be the issue at present.

—ARNE SWABECK.

23,000 Strike in Lawrence, Mass. Will Left Wing Repeat Errors?

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As we go to press, the report is received of the walkout of 23,000 textile workers in Lawrence, Mass., the second strike of the Lawrence workers in recent months. The alignment of the forces is not yet clear as this is written, but the wide scope of the strike and the militancy and determination of the workers is attested by the speed and numbers with which they have struck against the mill barons.

The A. F. of L. unions appear to be on the scene first, despite the fact that the last strike enabled the Left wing, through the National Textile Workers Union, to get a foothold in that famous textile district. The characteristic blunders of the Stalinist leadership at that time caused the Left wing to lose all that it had gained and more than that, what it might have gained. Past experi-

ences are eloquent and bitter testimony to the treachery of the A. F. of L. leadership, particularly in the recent textile strikes. The opportunity for a militant strike and a militant leadership is at hand in Lawrence now. But it will be lost fatally if the Left wing pursues the policy of sectarianism, bombast and bluff which has just had such catastrophic results in Paterson. Will the sober and responsible Left wing militants continue to allow the Stalinist incompetents to continue their rejection of the Leninist united front, a rejection which has been proved so ruinous of late?

See page FOUR of this issue for comrade Trotsky's keen analysis of the lessons of the recent referendum for the dissolution of the Prussian Landtag and the policy of the German Stalinists.

Hoover Announces New «Crisis Cure»

The latest Hoover conference, this time with the bankers who dominate the financial and industrial life of the country, and then, formally, with representatives in Congress of both parties, has brought forth a new panacea for the curing of the ills which are eating into the vitals of American imperialism. The new apostolic revelation from the White House advocates the establishment of a central corporation, with a revolving fund of at least half a billion dollars, which is to rediscount banking assets which are not now eligible for such service at Federal Reserve Banks. The aim is to free the so called "frozen assets" of the smaller banks which have been hit in past months, and further to set up the means

for furnishing loans to industry. In the background of the new plan hovers the question of foreign debts to the United States, and, by that, the all-pervading question of reparations. On this, Hoover makes only a vague reference, without indicating that there is to be any change from the policy enunciated by him at the time the debts-reparations moratorium was first proposed.

Only those who are permanently gullible will find it possible to believe that the new Hoover plan of action will succeed in liquidating the acute crisis through which the United States is passing. The principal problem for the American ruling class, and its governmental agent, Hoover, to solve, is that of setting the wheels of industry into motion on a scale which would at least approximate that of the late "prosperity" period. This problem Hoover has not even come close to solving by his numerous "conferences" in the past, and surely not by his oracular pronouncements that the "depression" was but slight and temporary. Freeing the frozen assets of hundreds of banks is a stop-gap in the situation. But it does not accomplish what is imperatively needed by capitalism: the extension of the market. The wage cuts throughout the world has only accentuated this state of affairs. Falling commodity prices, which have accentuated the decline in foreign trade, do not yet appear to have come to a halt in their careening downward.

Will the new central rediscount bank solve these key problems? Hardly. That it may bring a momentary relief to some of the banks, particularly in the rural sections, is possible. But the vital need of the millions who have been suffering the most intense misery since the commencement of the crisis, the foodless homes and the homeless families, can look forward to no amelioration of their lot. Under the best possible circumstances imaginable, with the setting into motion of the productive apparatus once more, the burdens of the wage cuts, the standing army of unemployed which is now and will be a permanent phenomenon in the United States, will weigh like mountains upon the living conditions of the American proletariat.

Each new plan produced by the capitalist aches and statesmen only demonstrates once more their hopeless bankruptcy. Even the respite that they may gain are only breathing spaces for the ruling class in their remorseless march towards the end. It is the workers' mission to speed the day to force concessions from bloated wealth, to act with resolution and militancy in the struggle for a new society.

Where Is Rakovsky?

Where is Christian Rakovsky? What is Stalin doing to him? What is happening with the unbending fighter against the imperialist war, the soldier of the Bolshevik revolution, the founder of the Communist International, the head of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic, the Bolshevik Ambassador to France, the sterling leader

of the Bolshevik-Leninist Opposition, expelled from the Russian party after the Fifteenth Congress and buried alive in exile?

The reports we receive are highly alarming. Neither in Moscow nor in Leningrad has anybody exact information about where Rakovsky is and under what conditions he is living. Two versions are being whispered about: according to one, Rakovsky is to have been transferred to Astrachan and placed under a "special regime"; according to the other, he is to have been interned as being in an "abnormal mental state". The versions are not contradictory. If Rakovsky is at Astrachan, which is quite possible, he is not at liberty, otherwise everybody who knows it. The "special regime" is the regime of complete isolation. It is quite possible and even probable that in order to explain away this isolation, the Stalinist agents are referring to Rakovsky's mental state. In one of his last reports, Yaroslavsky quoted certain letters and declarations of Rakovsky. Yaroslavsky went to Yagoda, of the G. P. U., to have him furnish political arguments to justify the crimes against the Left Opposition. Yaroslavsky's latest reports were enough to indicate the preparation of new repressions against this old revolutionist. These suppositions coincided entirely, as we see, with the absence of any exact information about Rakovsky and with the rumors spread about him.

Rakovsky was already deported to Astrachan before being transferred to Barnaul. The climate of Astrachan, a malarial breeding ground, is disastrous for Rakovsky. At the time of Stalin's "liberalism", Rakovsky was transferred from Astrachan upon the insistence of the doctors. If he has been sent back there, it means that Stalin has set himself

the immediate task of exterminating Rakovsky in the shortest possible time! This corresponds entirely with the general policy of Stalin, with his personal character and above all with his position at the present moment.

With the destruction of both the Left and the Right Oppositions, Stalin has finally revealed himself before the party and the proletariat. Economic developments have reached an extremely critical point. It is now impossible to throw the responsibility upon anyone. Before the working class, before its vanguard, stands the question of changing the policy, of changing the regime in the party and the Soviets—consequently, the question, above all, of the political fate of Stalin and his clique. That explains the new fury of repression against the Left Opposition: on the one hand, the base falsification of Yaroslavsky against Trotsky; on the other, the sinister measures of Stalin against Rakovsky. These complement each other.

Stalin is determined to achieve the complete physical annihilation of the thousands of imprisoned and exiled Left Oppositionists in the U. S. S. R., the flower of the Bolshevik core of the movement. Above all is he set upon sending Rakovsky to his grave. We say this openly and place the responsibility where it belongs.

To allow such an act to go by unchallenged by the militant workers would be a shameful calamity. The voices of protest must be raised so loudly and insistently that Stalin is compelled to retreat from his diabolical plan of extermination. In the party, in the Left wing organizations, everywhere, the demand must be made: Release the fighters of the October revolution! Stop the repressions against the Left Opposition! And above all, hands off Christian Rakovsky!

What About Paterson?

The Stalinists Unload Responsibility for Their Bankruptcy

The October 5, 1931, issue of the *Daily Worker* contains the following astounding letter on its editorial page from an organizer of the National Textile Workers Union and a reply by the acting editor of the party's central organ, which we quote here in full:

'WANTED: INFORMATION
"Dear Jorge," writes a comrade from South Carolina:—

"I see by the papers that Bill Murdoch is still national secretary of the National Textile Workers Union. This is interesting to me, as I am an organizer for that union, but 'way down South. I had thought he might be still in jail, or deported by now.

"And speaking of mislaid strikes, as you did the other day, I see a little story on the second page of today's *Daily Worker*, which implies that the Paterson strike is over, when it says: "During the strike, the militancy . . ." etc.

"This also is of special interest to me, since I am doing N. T. W. U. work.

I read the *Daily* every day, also *Labor Unity* and the *Southern Worker* each week, but I have no idea if the Paterson strike is still on, won, lost or anything about it. Maybe you can enlighten me. "I believe the N. T. W. U. had a National Council meeting on September 5, where undoubtedly some important matters were discussed. I would be interested to learn what took place. As I have not heard a word from the National Office of the N. T. W. U. since the early part of August, in spite of repeated requests, possibly you can let me have a few facts."

"Well, we knew that the comrade was 'sold down the river', but we are handicapped in answering by grape-vine telegram as the old abolitionists used to do.

"Firstly, we don't know, either, what has become of the Paterson strike. Maybe there never was a strike and we just imagined it. Maybe there was and maybe it's still on. We don't know and it seems doubtful whether the organizer of it knows, either.

"Maybe, in fact, there just ain't any National Textile Workers Union at all. Maybe it's what the philosophers call a

'social myth'. And maybe, finally, the Trade Union Unity League might do something about it."

The bewilderment if the Southern organizer is entirely understandable. For many days, the *Worker* has not printed a single word about the Paterson strike, as though it had never taken place. For weeks before that, the party leaders in charge of the N. T. W. U. forces in Paterson blared out, in big headlines and long stories, the announcement of their fabulous successes in the strike. Lacking actual support from the bulk of the silk workers, due to the radically false policy pursued by the Stalinists, the latter sought every day to make up for this lack by abuse, faked stories, bluff and bombast. At virtually every stage of the strike, the Left wing found itself to be outwitted by the A. F. of L.-Muste-Lovestone combination, which was itself sedulously preparing to surrender the strike and the strikers.

The proposals made by the Militant, which urged the Left wing to become the banner-bearer of the fight for unity of the strikers, were rejected by the callously cynical strategists of the Stalin school. They were going to prove how superior was their line of conduct in the strike.

Now the proof is evident to all. The party and Left wing forces have suffered a crushing defeat. What is left of the strike is apparently in the hands of reactionary fakers and their "progressive" stragglers. The *Daily Worker* does not even presume to speak of the strike any longer. Harrison George, acting editor of the *Worker*, member of the Political Bureau, highest body of the party, professes a complete ignorance about what has happened to the strike! Under cover of dull wit, George acknowledges what the party has not dared to grant publicly: that the result of the party's participation in Paterson is an admission of complete, disgraceful, unextended bankruptcy.

George pretends not to know a thing about the strike. Quite a comprehensive reply for a member of the almighty (Continued on page 2)

OPEN FORUM

Oct. 24th. THE RISE AND FALL OF THE MACDONALD LABOR GOVT
Lecture by Arne Swabek

Oct. 16th. Lessons of Recent Strike Struggles
(Coal miners and Paterson Textile strikes)

Lecture by James P. Cannon
Oct. 23rd. Communism and Syndicalism in Spain

Lecture by Max Shachtman
Oct. 30th. Tom Mooney's Appeal for a United Front

Lecture by James P. Cannon
LABOR TEMPLE, 14th St., and 2nd Ave.
Admission: 25 Cents
Unemployed admitted free with Unemployed Council card
Questions and Discussion

British Crisis Sharpens

Militant Correspondents Describe Moods of the Workers

LONDON.—The position here grows more and more unsatisfactory: it seems that as the crisis grows more acute so the uncertainty and confusion of the Party leadership increases. Their failure to state a concrete policy right at the beginning has led the Party into making blunder after blunder: even now the lead being issued is half-hearted and unreal.

The strong feeling aroused amongst the working-class shows no sign of diminishing: indeed it grows daily and has been strengthened by the sailors' splendid stand against the economies to be ef-

fected in their pay—a stand which has already brought promises from the Government of possible readjustment. But precisely because there exists no capable Communist leadership the movement seems likely to come to nothing.

It was necessary for the Party to enter this struggle perfectly clear about two things: the immediate steps to be taken by the workers, led by the party, to meet the Government's attack; the organization necessary and the ways of fighting; and the role of a revolutionary party in such a situation. On both these points the party blundered—it still avoids any clear answer to the question being asked by all workers "How are we to fight!" There can only be one reply since in such a situation the workers have only one weapon to commence such a fight with—general strike action. The party leadership asked whether strike action is their policy reply that strike action is a "weapon that needs to be used "wisely". True enough—but coming from those who for the last four years have sought strikes on every little pretext, have held up ridiculous "immediate demands for the workers to strike for, who have used the strike weapon on every "unwisely" and mainly to impress their Stalinist pay-master, it signifies a cowardly running away from the issues of the day. For the present Party campaign of demonstrations is meaningless and merely a parallel campaign to that of the I. L. P. if it is not run for the purpose of securing general action by the workers. When this is pointed out and when the results of this policy are seen in secret maneuvers with Maxton, Kirkwood and Brockway, the reply of the present leadership is to attack the party comrades of the "Left" and allow numerous right errors to go unchecked. Probably nothing could show the essentially reformist attitude of the Party leadership more strikingly than their attitude towards the sailors. The cuts in pay of the sailors received no attention from the Party and were

Second National Conference Marks Step Forward

The second national conference of the Communist League of America (Opposition) has completed its tasks through a four days session of fruitful discussion held in New York City, September 24 to 27 inclusive. In the unanimous opinion of all delegates it recorded a substantial forward step for the Left Opposition in taking account of the past, both of achievements and of shortcomings, as well as in its adoption of a guiding policy for future work.

A completely free and untrammelled discussion during a preceding sixty days period, conducted without any trace of the factional or bureaucratic encumbrances which have now become the rule in the official parties, culminated at this conference in such a way that the delegates could return to their branches with a conviction of having attained further strength to the future cadres of the American Communist movement. This does not mean that no difference of viewpoints were presented, for example, on such issues as an evaluation of present trends of economic and political processes as well as in regards to interpretation of the role of the Left Opposition in its practical tasks. There were such

differences. However, in every fundamental aspect the discussion resulted in practically unanimous conclusions.

With comrade Coover from Minneapolis in the chair for the first day's session, the credential committees reported the following branches represented: Toronto, Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, St. Louis, Kansas City and Minneapolis. Smaller branches, such as Montreal, New Haven and Richmond, could not see their way to send delegates and in general bearing upon reducing the size of the delegation, for example, from such distant points as Chicago and Minneapolis. The delegates were practically exclusively workers direct from the shops, many unemployed and compelled to beat their way to the conference or to travel on local expenses; hence, the inevitable reduction of size. Not only that but some regularly elected delegates, because of these economic reasons, had to be replaced by alternatives. In this respect a certain weakness became manifest by the absence of those experienced comrades who could otherwise have contributed much.

In spite of these handicaps, the second conference succeeded as expected in

marking a new stage when compared to the first held a little better than two years ago. At the first conference the pivotal point became the one of elaboration of a platform based upon the general international views of the Left Opposition with an endeavor to apply it in the sense of building a functioning group in the United States and Canada.

Compared to this, the second conference could record a developing degree of maturity. Several experiences were already at hand not only of results of our propaganda activities but also of our becoming a factor of actual intervention in the Communist movement. Thus it had a firmer foundation to build upon and could further elaborate these views in conformity with the additional requirements of a situation of intensifying developments in the class struggle. Fully cognizant of this more advanced stage, the second conference adopted in full the views contained in the various theses presented by the National Committee, endorsed its stewardship during the past period and decided to continue the leadership with an addition of two members to the National Committee. Thus the committee is now constituted with the

following membership: Martin Abern, James P. Cannon, Vincent Dunne, Albert Glotzer, Hugo Oehler, Max Shachtman, Carl Skoglund, Maurice Spector and Arne Swabek.

It cannot be denied that since the first conference, that is, during the early period following it, a certain organizational slump set in, which naturally also had its political repercussions. The center became greatly weakened, the necessary means for carrying on the work were seriously curtailed and naturally elements of friction. One of the blows was expressed in the inability to continue the weekly publication of the *Militant* which had begun in November 1929, about one year after the first expulsions of Left Oppositionists. Yet the great vitality of the organization, the power of the Left Opposition platform made it possible to weather this period with only minor disorganization in a few branches. So much so that capitulations or actual loss of membership during these trying difficulties were exceedingly rare within our ranks.

This experience the conference faced (Continued on page 3)

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