

ON THE WORKERS' FRONT

Lessons from the Furriers' Fight for the Coming Dressmakers' Struggle

The atmosphere created in recent months by the unity maneuvers in the furriers' trade has fully absorbed the minds and hearts of the needle trades workers. How and by what means we can really bring about unity in the needle industry, is the topic of the day.

Conditions of Workers

The present conditions of the needle trades workers are miserable beyond description. The earnings of the workers have reached the lowest level. While previously the prevailing standards were enjoyed by broad strata of the needle workers and were pretty much universal, at present the very low level of earnings spreads misery and discontent among the great majority of the needle workers. Maintenance of former piece-work rates and week-work scales is only an exception. The average needle trades worker feels that the working conditions in the trade don't afford him a decent living any more. These miserable conditions remind the workers constantly of the desperate need for unity in the organized ranks, and is becoming more and more the outstanding problem agitating the needle trades workers.

The deep-going interest in unity for needle workers has expressed itself very amply in the recent united front negotiations in the fur trade. Here the Left wing has certainly been outwitted, at least at the outset, by the Right wing. The Kaufman gang was forced to start this movement because of the turn of events in the fur trade. The movement for July raises, under the leadership of the Industrial Union, again awakened the hope of the workers in the possibility of reviving the fur department of the N. T. W. I. U. and they immediately demonstrated that by cutting off the payments from the International Fur Workers and by intensifying the fight within it. The so-called united front call was resorted to as a means of escaping the very embarrassing situation. After all, it took the whole A. F. of L., the New York police force, and the bosses' association, to put the furriers into Kaufman's outfit. And here, one move of the Industrial Union to do constructive work is threatening the whole foundation and the structure of the Fur International. The fur workers turn their ears to the fake call of Kaufman nevertheless. Some of them took the call at face value. Others felt the need for participation in the united front conference to exploit the slight chance for unity in the ranks.

The Industrial Union was vacillating, because of the incorrect policy of classifying all and everyone and putting them into the same group of the bosses, without any differentiation.

To respond the call would have meant "to go to a united conference of the bosses", to make "peace with the fascists", etc., etc. Their own wrong policy turned back on them. Gold went so far as to pronounce demonstratively and also in order to conform to the old policy that "if you elect me to represent you and to participate in the conference, I will resign my position". But the workers won the day. Their pressure to participate in the conference was adopted at the eleventh hour, in spite of the decision of the fraction to the contrary. The advance guard of the fur workers, the party comrades, nursed on the wrong policies of Stalinism, failed to sense the right spirit of the workers and to act accordingly. Subsequent events have proved that the policy finally adopted was correct. The presence of the Industrial Union and the proposals for tangible work, like the organization of the unorganized and the campaign to im-

prove their conditions as a pre-requisite for a united union, exposed the factors once more and showed up the appeal for unity with the militant fur workers.

Our job has not ended yet. The Right wing may not call us any more to conferences, but we won't forget to remind them and the workers about these maneuvers. The Industrial Union will have to call again and again for unity of action on specific issues to improve the conditions of the fur workers. The negotiations, despite the Stalinist confusion, have nevertheless strengthened the faith of the workers in the Left wing, and have certainly raised the spirit and fighting ability of the Left wing fur workers and sympathizers in the Fur International.

Coming Dress Strike

What lessons are we going to draw from this united front in order to change our tactics in the coming dressmakers' strike? So far, it seems as though the policy pursued in the furriers was only a temporary retreat from the old methods only because of the pressure exerted by the workers. The last shop delegates' council meeting displayed utter disregard for the latest experience. In answer to some definite proposals made by the writer of these lines for the coming conference of the dressmakers called by the United Front Committee, its representative gave a general A B C talk about unity in the shop. It seems that the generally known unity in the shops is becoming a new policy in the hands of the United Front representative. Left wingers have known in practice for years such unity in the shops. So far, the United Front Committee of the dressmakers set itself up as almost a dual Industrial Union with the same wrong policies in stock, forgetting completely its function, and the meaning of its aim. At this late date, it has nothing yet to propose for the coming conference. The members of the Industrial Union, adherents to the Left Opposition, propose the following:

There is a wide field for organization of unorganized workers in the needle industry. The I. U. should begin a serious campaign for organization to broaden the base of the Industrial Union and to improve conditions of the workers.

The Industrial Union should aim to gain the workers for our ranks, but should in no case call those workers who are in the ranks of the Right wing-controlled union, scabs or scab agents.

The Union affiliation should remain for final decision with the workers of the shop. The Left wing has nothing to fear and will be assured of the needle trades workers' support both morally and organizationally if it should conduct the proper campaign for the organization of the unorganized.

The Industrial Union must make every effort at this time particularly to strengthen the opposition within the international. The organized Left wing in the International should first of all begin a systematic fight and propaganda campaign for the principles of the Industrial Union, and for united action of the two Unions especially in the coming dressmakers strike.

The Industrial Union must eradicate the opinion that was created in the minds of the needle trade workers due to the erroneous policy of staying at work during the dressmakers' strike of the International in 1929, by stating it publicly in our oral and written proclamations.

The Industrial Union should immediately propose a conference of representatives of both unions for the purpose of electing a united front action committee for the drawing up of the demands

for the coming dressmakers' strike. The united front must be based on the recognition of both unions as such. The Left wing will of course put forward such demands that will make the strike a real struggle for the improvement of the working conditions in the needle industry. At the same time the Left wing will reserve the right of and continue the sharpest criticism of the Right wing of officialdom and the Lovestone liquidators.

These proposals of united front tactics, if adopted and carried out, will serve as a step forward in building the Industrial Union and the Left wing generally. We on our part, pledge our whole-hearted cooperation morally, physically and financially. We will not fall to do all in our power to hasten the adoption of these proposals. We will speak at the meetings of the Industrial Union, issue leaflets to the dressmakers, and appeal to the members of the union. It is our duty to break down the wall of wrong policy, which has hampered the union and reduced it to its present state. We appeal to every dressmaker to work tirelessly from now on till the conference to make it a real success and a conference of many representatives of organized and unorganized shops in the dress trade.

—SYLVIA BLEEKER

The Government Civil Service Applies Hooverism to the White Collar Slave

40,000 applications have been filed for the nation-wide examination for stenographer and typist, and in itself demonstrates the enormous unemployment and state of insecurity that prevails among the office workers and "white-collar" workers generally.

The official statement of the U. S. Civil Service Commission, says:

"Approximately 40,000 formal applications were filed with the United States Civil Service Commission at Washington for the stenographer and typist examinations. . . ."

"This establishes a record for all time. In the same examinations held in 1930 for the departmental service, 8,546 applications were filed with the Commission, a record number at that time. . . ."

The Commission acknowledges that, "the greatly increased number of applicants is, without doubt, due to the general industrial depression", and also admits that this huge increase of applicants for Civil Service jobs is to be met with

in other classes of positions.

The vast numbers of unemployed or poorly paid office workers vaguely believe and hope that a Civil Service job, "working for the government", will bring a large degree of economic security, permanent employment, and that their worries will then be over. It is a pitiful hope and illusion; for capitalist government, no less than its bosses, the private proprietors of industries, lands and banks, must face by and large the problems posed by an economic crisis, political instability, etc. Budgets must be balanced, taxes arranged—according to the requirements of the employers, the rulers of the land. Employees, whether of a local, state or national government, or employees of a private capitalist, remain economically—wage slaves. When "times are hard", the government employee, like any other worker, is also hit by layoffs, increase of working hours, wage-cuts, etc.

But so strong is the illusion of government jobs, Civil Service appointments, etc., that between the year 1930 and 1931, an increase of approximately 450% in the number of applicants for stenographer and typist jobs, is recorded. And 1930, with its 8,546 was already a record year for applications. To cap it all, the U. S. Civil Service Commission does not mention the number of jobs actually open for the 40,000 applicants. By the tens of thousands, the applicants are to fall by the wayside, and left to ponder their future fate, lack of jobs and security under capitalism.

Low Wages of Civil Service Workers

It might be thought, further, that these stenographic and typist jobs, for which 40,000 humans swarm in desperation, paid handsome wages. Yet the wage for the highest paid stenographic position is \$31.00 per week and the low is \$24.00. And in this mad plunge of applicants for \$24.00 and \$31.00 a week jobs, the race is not merely to the swiftest. With an unconscious sense of humor or irony, the Civil Service Commission announces with dignity that "Recently . . . it has improved its test for stenographers and typists for the Government Service." For in addition to the ability to take dictation and to transcribe notes, "such an employee should have good judgment . . . more knowledge of the English language, etc." All for \$24.00 and \$31.00 a week, and the right to "work for the government".

It is known to all and sundry that the U. S. Government, and its official spokesman, President Hoover, have professed great concern about the unemployed, and have even called upon the captains of industry not to lay off workers or to cut wages. It has however been amply proved that neither Hoover,

the government nor the bosses were serious about such statements; and the employers have, from the day of Hoover's statement, continuously cut wages, increased hours of labor, and laid off workers, so that some 10,000,000 are today unemployed in the United States.

U. S. Government Increases Hours

Now the government adds its bit, and we quote, for the benefit of the stenographic and typist applicants, postal workers and any others who may read, a statement of the Post Office Department.

"Because of the greatly increased deposits, all employees in the postal savings division are required to work eight and one-half hours a day, an increase of one-half hour over the regular Federal workday. This extra work will not involve any salary increase. The Department found it necessary to hire more men, or to require overtime work of present employees, and decides upon the latter course." Capitalist government and employers set their course by the dollar sign or requirements of capitalist economy, and not by those of the worker.

The office worker or "white-collar" employee, unquestionably in the past and largely yet in the present, is affected by the ideas of the capitalist class, particularly of the middle class. Actually feeble in an economic sense, he has endeavored to ape the class he aspired to. The viewpoint of the office-worker has been slow to change. But low wages, unemployment on a tremendous scale among office workers, inability to pretend even to "keep up with the Joneses", are driving the office worker, very slowly as yet, toward a common economic and ideological position with the rest of labor.

Need to Organize "White-Collar" workers

There are no special and final reasons that prevent the organization of the "white-collar" workers into militant labor unions. European countries have witnessed them. The United States need not be exempt from progress in this field. It is folly to surrender all the millions of extremely low-paid office workers to the existing capitalist movements or to potential Fascist movements, or to liberal and social-democratic ideologists. While there are obvious limitations in approaching and winning such elements, the policy of virtually ignoring them is patently wrong. The American Federation of Labor has only played about with the question of organizing the office workers, and its federal labor unions have been made up to a large extent of civil service employees. These should be reached by all means also. But hitherto the other millions of office workers have been passed by. The Left wing has made sporadic efforts of organization and has gotten mostly office help employed by unions.

The task of organization of this wide field of workers is basically the same as with the industrial workers, with all due advantages as are already known in the organization of the latter. The appeal must be broad and on elemental economic and class issues. Sectarian appeal will not work. Yet the only efforts able to succeed will have to be exerted by the militant and Left wing workers and organizations. —M. A.

Stalinists Again Out Left Opposition at Chicago Unemployment Conference

CHICAGO.—

The Oct. 18th conference of the Cook County Unemployment Councils, the third in three months, ended by laying the "base" for a fourth conference next month, electing delegates to call on city and county authorities to present demands, a committee for a Cook County Hunger March and a committee to line up preliminaries for the Nov. 7th march on Washington. The usual party and sympathetic element was in attendance and the usual bureaucratic methods and lack of Marxian program.

Comrade Curtis of the Left Opposition was elected on the credentials committee of five and when it came to the point of seating the three delegates from the League, Buckley, Curtis and Oehler, the party representative, Rybicki moved that they not be seated. Curtis spoke for the seating and to the surprise of the bureaucrats the vote was three to two in favor of comrade Curtis' motion in the credentials committee, one of the three being a party member who voted with Curtis and could not see why we could not be seated. After a long argument Rybicki finally "convinced" the other party member that he was "wrong" and he said, well what ever Rybicki says is correct. This gave the bureaucrats a majority.

In the meantime, comrade Oehler had obtained the floor for five minutes and dealt with the one point of adding the struggle for the shorter work day with the present two main demands of social insurance and immediate relief, concretizing it in the slogan of the six-hour day and the five day week. The delegates gave an excellent response to these remarks, but Rybicki who had come out to caucus with the other bureaucrats to see what to do about the way things were drifting, came back to the credentials committee and reported that the conference had hooted the "Trotsky delegate, Oehler" down. This was an attempt to weaken the resistance to his motion to oust us from the convention. Gebert, the D. O., took the floor after the League speaker and devoted fifteen minutes to slander and demagoguery against the Left. The conference had started late and only several delegates had the floor for five minutes following and again

went to reports of committees over the protest of many delegates.

The "majority" report of the credentials committee was not to seat us. Comrade O'Hara, a Communist, but not a member of the party or the Left, being one of the members of the credentials committee, representing a large unemployment council, took the floor to give a minority report. He was denied the right to present a minority report. All delegates were denied the right to speak on the motion presented by the "majority report". It was railroaded through in the most brazen A. F. L. fashion. The bureaucrats feared a minority report, they feared discussion on the "Majority report"—they fear the Marxian position of the Left Opposition that smashed into their opportunist program.

In an uproar and protest from all parts of the floor and its usual counter-approver of lesser bureaucrats hollering for the kicking and throwing out of the three delegates the will and desire of the Stalin bureaucrats overrode the interest of the workers by refusing to seat the Marxian wing of the Communist forces.

A motion to throw us out of the hall was not entertained by chairman Otto Wangerlin. The committee on resolutions reported, presenting the draft program of the last conference for final corrections and adoptions. The amendments of the Left Opposition had been given to the committee but of course the resolutions committee said nothing on this.

The Chicago League continues its support of the Unemployment Councils and will fight for a correction and development of its program which at present has many opportunist points. Unemployment councils not being the Communist party cannot be expected to have a complete Communist program but unemployment councils under the leadership of the Communist party (and no one can question this) must have a correct Marxian program on what partial demands it takes up in the field of unemployment and must above all not have an adventurist or opportunist line. The Chicago League, true to the interest of the working class, can do nothing else than fight against the bureaucrats and their wrong line and for the unemployment councils. —H. O.

to reports of committees over the protest of many delegates.

The "majority" report of the credentials committee was not to seat us. Comrade O'Hara, a Communist, but not a member of the party or the Left, being one of the members of the credentials committee, representing a large unemployment council, took the floor to give a minority report. He was denied the right to present a minority report. All delegates were denied the right to speak on the motion presented by the "majority report". It was railroaded through in the most brazen A. F. L. fashion. The bureaucrats feared a minority report, they feared discussion on the "Majority report"—they fear the Marxian position of the Left Opposition that smashed into their opportunist program.

In an uproar and protest from all parts of the floor and its usual counter-approver of lesser bureaucrats hollering for the kicking and throwing out of the three delegates the will and desire of the Stalin bureaucrats overrode the interest of the workers by refusing to seat the Marxian wing of the Communist forces.

A motion to throw us out of the hall was not entertained by chairman Otto Wangerlin. The committee on resolutions reported, presenting the draft program of the last conference for final corrections and adoptions. The amendments of the Left Opposition had been given to the committee but of course the resolutions committee said nothing on this.

The Chicago League continues its support of the Unemployment Councils and will fight for a correction and development of its program which at present has many opportunist points. Unemployment councils not being the Communist party cannot be expected to have a complete Communist program but unemployment councils under the leadership of the Communist party (and no one can question this) must have a correct Marxian program on what partial demands it takes up in the field of unemployment and must above all not have an adventurist or opportunist line. The Chicago League, true to the interest of the working class, can do nothing else than fight against the bureaucrats and their wrong line and for the unemployment councils. —H. O.

to reports of committees over the protest of many delegates.

The "majority" report of the credentials committee was not to seat us. Comrade O'Hara, a Communist, but not a member of the party or the Left, being one of the members of the credentials committee, representing a large unemployment council, took the floor to give a minority report. He was denied the right to present a minority report. All delegates were denied the right to speak on the motion presented by the "majority report". It was railroaded through in the most brazen A. F. L. fashion. The bureaucrats feared a minority report, they feared discussion on the "Majority report"—they fear the Marxian position of the Left Opposition that smashed into their opportunist program.

In an uproar and protest from all parts of the floor and its usual counter-approver of lesser bureaucrats hollering for the kicking and throwing out of the three delegates the will and desire of the Stalin bureaucrats overrode the interest of the workers by refusing to seat the Marxian wing of the Communist forces.

A motion to throw us out of the hall was not entertained by chairman Otto Wangerlin. The committee on resolutions reported, presenting the draft program of the last conference for final corrections and adoptions. The amendments of the Left Opposition had been given to the committee but of course the resolutions committee said nothing on this.

The Chicago League continues its support of the Unemployment Councils and will fight for a correction and development of its program which at present has many opportunist points. Unemployment councils not being the Communist party cannot be expected to have a complete Communist program but unemployment councils under the leadership of the Communist party (and no one can question this) must have a correct Marxian program on what partial demands it takes up in the field of unemployment and must above all not have an adventurist or opportunist line. The Chicago League, true to the interest of the working class, can do nothing else than fight against the bureaucrats and their wrong line and for the unemployment councils. —H. O.

A Few "Pages from Party History"

For a few issues now, Lovestone has been printing in his paper extracts from old documents in the past faction fights of the party, under the general title of "pages from party history". So that the "pages" may be rather more complete and all-sided than are those presented by Lovestone, we call attention to one or two which Lovestone would surely much rather were forgotten, or at least not mentioned in polite society. We have pointed out once already that at the time Stalin and Co. were so disconcertingly kicking Lovestone out of the party's leadership, the Right wing leader played as one of his trumps the fact that it was Bedacht, the "loyalist", who had proposed to Lovestone after the 1929

convention of the party that their faction establish relations with Brandler in Berlin. With all the indignation he could muster, Lovestone declared that he had spurned so base a proposal. Now we recall that Lovestone, a short time before the party convention which sealed his fate, wrote a mendacious pamphlet against the expelled "Trotskyists" and the Poster-Bittelmann faction which was soon to replace him. It was called "Pages from Party History", and on pages 12 and 16 of this cynically falsified collection of petty bourgeois self-praise, we read about Lovestone's accomplishments as follows:

"Let us examine some of the main steps toward Bolshevization, toward eradicating the menace of opportunism taken by the party under its present leadership. Merely to enumerate, these are: . . . (11) The party under its present leadership has been among the first sections of the Communist International in combatting deviations from the Leninist line . . . Our party has pursued an energetic policy in the struggle against Brandler and Thalheimer and other Right wingers and conciliators in the German party. In the Fifth Plenum of the Communist International, the comrades representing the viewpoint now held by the majority of the Party were amongst the most aggressive in the struggle against Brandler, Thalheimer, Bubnik and the Trotskyist deviators from the Leninist line."

Lovestone, in the first period of his expulsion from the party, sailed under the same flag. At the very moment that he was negotiating with the German Right wingers he continued to thunder against Brandlerism. When the change was finally made in the open, there was no explanation of the past, no explanation of the reasons for the change. In fact, the American Right wing talks with such unrestrained enthusiasm about its German prototype that one might almost believe that it was not Lovestone who was for years (immediately after the official decree was handed down) the most savage fighter against Brandler, whom he scrupled as little to misrepresent as he did to denounce. And now that he has "learned better", perhaps he will tell us what caused the change of heart—for Brandler today is only a generalized and systematized edition of all the mistakes of the Right wing before 1928. And while questions are being put, let us put this one too:

What has become of the Right wing's "International"? Has it collapsed completely? We do not hear a whisper from it, or a word about it in the Right wing press. Has the whole thing been called off as a superfluous formality? Why?

An answer to these questions would surely be of interest.

FOR YOUR LIBRARY

Books by Leon Trotsky

THE STRATEGY OF THE WORLD REVOLUTION	
86 pages, two-colored paper cover	25c
Introduction by Max Shachtman	
THE DRAFT PROGRAM OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL	
A Criticism of Fundamentals	
Introduction by J. P. Cannon	
140 pages hard paper cover	35c
THE SPANISH REVOLUTION	
30 pages, paper cover	10c
THE PERMANENT REVOLUTION	
208 page book—cloth bound	1.00
paper bound	.50
THE REAL SITUATION IN RUSSIA	
Introduction by Max Eastman	
364 page book formerly \$2 now	1.00
MY LIFE—600 pages	5.00
COMMUNISM AND SYNDICALISM	
The Trade Union Question	
Introduction by James P. Cannon	
64 pages, paper cover	15c
THE SPANISH REVOLUTION IN DANGER	
64 pages paper cover	15c
PROBLEMS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE U. S. S. R.	
48 pages, paper cover	15c
Special Rates in Bundles of 5 or more	
SINCE LENIN DIED	
By Max Eastman	
1924	50c
158 page book printed in London	
Pioneer Publishers	
84 East 10th Street	
New York City	

Youth Will Issue «Young Spartacus» as Organ

In 70 B. C. the slave and gladiator Spartacus commenced a magnificent struggle of revolt against the oppression and rule of the Roman Empire. In the course of battles in which thousands of revolting slaves gathered around the banner raised by the Greek Spartacus, ten Roman armies were defeated and laid to waste before the patricians and military power of Rome could gather sufficient strength to beat down the glorious revolt of the enslaved masses. Spartacus and his followers went to their death, but for the slaves, plebeians, serfs and tollers, there remain forever the glory and inspiration of the revolt of Spartacus and his fellow-slaves and gladiators.

The Communist League of America (Opposition) aims to develop further the Spartacus tradition of struggle, revolt and organization against the slavery of today—wage-slavery, which enfolds countless millions of toiler, young and old, throughout the world. The National Youth Committee of the Communist League jointly with the National Committee of the Communist League, have decided to call the forthcoming Youth paper of the Left Opposition, announced in the previous issue of the MILITANT—Young Spartacus. The youth of the Left Opposition, in claiming the tradition of Spartacus for the revolutionary youth and proletarian movement of today thereby also lift high the symbol and banner by which Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg gathered the first cohorts of Communism in Germany into the Spartacus League—Communist Party of Germany.

The issuance of Young Spartacus in the very near future represents another advance of the Communist League of America and the International Left Opposition in the endeavor to bring clearly

again into the confusion wrought by the theories and practices of Centrism, led and nurtured by Stalin. It is but the first, we hope, of youth publications by the Left Opposition.

For the young workers in the United States, in the official Young Communist League, for Communist sympathizers among the toiling and student youth of America, the issuance of Young Spartacus, it is hoped and expected, will be one of the means whereby the revolutionary youth can once again step into the front ranks of Communism in the demand for clarity of purpose, sound theory and program, for militancy and action. The Young Worker, official organ of the Young Communist League, is but a caricature of what a youth paper should be. It grovels before the bureaucrats of the party, and makes sycophants of the youth, acceptors without question of any and all orders handed down from above. The official apparatus of the Y. C. L. and the party is passively accepted, at best with whispered criticism. Neither thought nor educational material of any real consequence is any longer to be found in its columns. The revolutionary youth in the United States needs a revolutionary youth paper and this role Young Spartacus aims to fulfill. In his letter to his party nucleus, entitled "The New Course", Trotsky has this to say concerning the youth:

"It is wholly inadequate that the youth should repeat our formulas [i. e. of the older comrades so-called Old Guard—M. A.] It is necessary that the youth should take the revolutionary formulas, transform them into flesh and blood, work out for themselves their own opinion with that courage that comes from sincere conviction and independence of character. Passive obedience, mech-

anical drill, characterlessness, obsequiousness, careerism—away with these things from the party! A Bolshevik is not only a disciplined man; no, a Bolshevik is a man who, boring deep, has worked out for himself in each given instance a firm opinion, and courageously and independently defends it, not only in war with his enemies, but also within in his own organization. Today he may be in the minority in the organization. He submits because it is his party. But that obviously does not always mean that he was wrong. . . ."

The members of the Young Communist League and the Young Worker today only too plainly do not have that independence and courage and clarity which characterize the kind of revolutionary youth needed in the Communist movement. Trotsky's words are the words for any vital, thinking revolutionary youth. The Youth fraction of the Communist League, through Young Spartacus, as well as through the coming formation of youth clubs, will endeavor to instill the fundamentals of Communist theory and practice among the youth it can reach. In the Young Communist League of America there is also worthy tradition, particularly of its early years as the Y. W. L. when Clarity and Action were its slogans. Young Spartacus will endeavor to fulfill these slogans. Every adult worker and member of the Communist League and sympathizer of the Left Opposition should help in the issuance and maintenance of the forthcoming Young Spartacus which will start as a monthly four page paper, tabloid size. H. Stone has been selected as Business Manager of Young Spartacus and funds for it may now be sent to H. Stone, care of Young Spartacus, 84 East 10th Street, New York, N. Y.—M. A.