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The Dress Strike Settlement Some Lessons the Left Wing Must Draw from It

The New York dressmakers' strike came to an end with the workers returning to practically the same conditions as before—that is, to the sweatshop. This was not because of the lack of a fighting spirit on their part. On the contrary. At a time of general working class acceptance of wage cuts without resistance, these dressmakers set a glorious example by walking out and bringing a considerable number of workers along from the unorganized shops. Their ranks were solid. But their officials of the dominant union, the International Ladies Garment Workers, were primarily concerned about not inconveniencing the jobbers and manufacturers. They themselves proved to be the hit our often repeated warning, not only to watch their declarations but also to watch their fingers signing new agreements. Yet it must be said: Above all, this strike demonstrated the disastrous weakness of a situation where workers are divided in struggle.

Inevitably this situation is reflected in the settlements made by both unions. The I. L. G. W., for example, agreed with the jobbers and inside manufacturers upon certain measures of when and how to fix prices of piece work, but without any guarantee of the demanded minimum price amounting to \$1.10 per hour. The employers' demand for a 10 per cent reorganization right was rejected, but still leaving provisions as their command for reduction of the working force at the end of the season. A certain form of union recognition is granted, but it amounts in this case to facilitate the ironing out of conflicts between the various strata of bosses. The jobbers association has agreed to confine their work to members of the contractors association. The union obtains the right to protest any working in the shops over and above the five day week, but even that is left for final decision of the impartial chairman. As a whole, no practical change from conditions before the past agreement expired, but leaving plenty of loopholes for further connivance between the employers and their union agents.

Did the Left wing forces in the industrial union fare better in regard to actual strike gains? In this situation that could hardly be expected. As a matter of fact it had to rest content with agreement obtained one by one in individual shops, generally speaking also on practically the same conditions as prevailed prior to the strike.

The Serious Weakness of Two Separate Strikes

Such is the balance sheet of another settled conflict in which the workers, again forming the battling ranks, became the mere object of maneuvers. Their grievances were identical. All were working in the same industry. Yet there were two strikes, called separately, conducted separately and settled separately despite the unity obtained on the picket lines. This could not be conducive to wringing great concessions from the bosses. That the industrial union—that is the Left wing—side of the fight was conducted in the name of a united front committee altered nothing but brought more confusion to the serious objectives of actual workers' unity.

The actual situation in the New York dress shops is now, as before, one in which working conditions and piece work prices are practically the same in unorganized shops, in shops controlled by the I. L. G. and in shops under industrial union control. That, of course, is no great inducement for workers to organize. After all, to the rank and file the most telling argument for organization is one of conditions obtained by the union. That is true even for the dressmakers who have such a splendid fighting tradition. In the same measure it must also be emphatically stated that, while it cannot be expected that the Left wing industrial union, as a minority organization, can force far ahead in gaining conditions, if it cannot at least advance a policy which stands out clearly as superior to that of the Right wing officialdom it forfeits its possibility of winning the masses. Mere propaganda for the Left wing position in its abstract sense is not sufficient. When it degenerates to pure and simple demagoguery, as is now the case of the official party leadership of the industrial union, it becomes actually harmful, because the result is that the workers lose respect for the Left wing and lose confidence in its ability. Moreover, the gentlemen in charge of the I. L. G. W. are far more skilled in the art of demagoguery and have proven alert in maintaining their hold upon the workers on that basis. In this strike the Left wing union, under immediate party direction, did not at all show superiority of policy or in leadership of struggle. Here was a plain problem of two organizations struggling against a common enemy, against conditions commonly abhorred and commonly hated. What was the burning need, if not that of common struggle and common working out of the immediate objectives in such a way to help frustrate sell-outs. This was a plain duty confronting the revolutionary

party and the industrial union leadership.

What did the official party leadership propose? It established a shibboleth which it called the united front committee. It called upon the dressmakers to support this committee, informing them that they did not need to belong to either of the two unions. What argument is that for unionization? Is a substitute for either, or both of these two unions, what is needed? Obviously that could not be the need and ultimately it would negate the very right of the industrial union to exist.

The revolutionists among the needle trades workers must first of all tell them categorically that union organization is the vitally necessary instrument of struggle for their everyday needs. Next they must make clear what kind of union is required, certainly stressing the superiority of the industrial form. They must in actual practice help demonstrate the tactics of a militant policy as a substitution for the treacherous connivance with the employers. But the most powerful weapon of the revolutionary party remains the one of unification of the workers against the common enemy and against the treacherous influence of the yellow leaders. That, of course, would in its first step mean a united front of the two organizations and final trade union unity.

In some cases there is no other way out but by separate unions. That was so at the time of the formation of the industrial union. At the present time, however, the question of trade union unity looms as a serious one, and particularly in the needle trades. That at least should be a lesson from the strike.

Consequently the Left wing should urge the workers in the I. L. G. W. to remain there and to fight for unity. We do not propose this slogan of unity on the basis of whatever conditions the reactionary officials may desire to lay down. Not at all. It is a fighting

OPEN FORUM

Lecture by
ARNE SWABECK
"LESSONS OF THE
DRESSMAKERS STRIKE"
at the
Labor Temple
14th Street and Second Avenue
Friday, March 11, 1932
at 8 P. M.

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slogan and implies a simultaneous fight for certain definite conditions. We do not propose unity merely in its abstract sense but for the attainment of specific working class objectives.

Despite the present situation of the sweatshop still obtaining in the garment industry future growth of the I. L. G. W. is not precluded. But with that also growth of the problems of this union for satisfaction of the demands of the workers. Certainly this implies possibilities of formation and growth of a Left wing within the union. With equally as much certainty we can also point to the prospects which are available for growth of the industrial union provided it proceeds correctly. To that can be added the general prospects of a developing workers' resistance to the enemy onslaughts which is destined to assume real proportions for the future. From this must be concluded that on a whole the need and the possibilities for trade union unity of these organizations who are rivals today will increase. This contains a warning which must be heeded.

—A. S.

Fake Peace Gestures in Far East Imperialists Jockeying for Position in Coming World Clashes

The day's news hails the acceptance by Japanese imperialism of the armistice proposals made by the League of Nations. That this "peaceful" gesture is merely a continuation of the aggressive policy of the Tokio statesmen along new lines, cannot be mistaken. And it is especially the Wall Street spokesmen at Washington who know this fact and bring their actions in accord with it. A Japanese acceptance of the truce can only take place under conditions favorable to the invaders. Tokio does not conceal these intentions. It is simply putting into play a diplomatic maneuver which it is confident the French reactionaries and a "strong pro-Japanese Tory group in the British cabinet"—actually the backbone of the present conservative government—will support.

It is only natural that the Hoover regime is disgruntled with this state of affairs. One thing is certain: the conclusion of the truce, if it should get as far as that, will hardly mean the end of the Far Eastern episode, but will largely rather bring it more closely within the framework of a broad struggle among the world imperialists themselves. The United States, through the mouth of Stimson, in his letter to Senator Borah, has already expressed its determination not to recognize any new transactions, involving China, that will break the boundaries set by previous treaties (The Nine Power Treaty, etc.). The Japanese militarists will not pay any attention to them.

They have already too much at stake. They started out on their Manchurian adventure because they saw an opportunity in the present unstable economic positions of the other powers, to get some badly needed markets for their own hard-pressed industries. In view of the belated arrival on the scene of Japanese capitalism, that was only to be expected. In the meantime, the boycott of its goods in China and the rapidly growing war expenses are further devouring the resources of Nippon's industries. Already the various organs of the Tokio government—the Privy Council, the cabinet—are very wary to make further levies on the population for the conduct of military operations, especially since the latter have hardly met with the desired success. But it is impossible to conceive of anything like a "peaceful" retreat on their part.

The American gentlemen-brigands, whose aim it has been, ever since the inception of the present crisis, to find a solution for it by a vast extension of its foreign market, specifically in a centralized bourgeois China, look with great concern upon Japanese machinations. More immediately, American industry has already sustained losses in its recently increased exports to China (brought about by the creation of a demand for American products, subsequent to the devastations of last year's flood) through the siege at Shanghai, which hardly improves the attitude of Washington. The concentration of the United States fleet in the Pacific, and the maneuvers attending it, are especially significant when viewed from this angle, although not in a direct sense.

In China itself, the valiant fight put up by the Nineteenth Route Army in its defense of Chapei has not brought forth the nation-wide response that many ex-

pected. In the absence of a resolute and conscious class to lead it, the Kuo Min Tang bourgeoisie has for the moment succeeded only in making a football for the imperialists, of the Chinese nation. The most progressive class in the Chinese masses, the proletariat, suffered a frightful defeat at the hands of its own bourgeoisie during the Chiang Kai-Shek-Borodin-Stalin alliance in 1925-1927. The slaughter of the flower of the Chinese working class by Chiang Kai-Shek and the frightful depression following it could only be counter-acted by a slow and patient regathering of its scattered forces, by a wide-spread struggle for the most elementary rights, as was proposed by comrade Trotsky and the Left Opposition at the time. The failure of the Stalinists in control to realize this Marxian tactic and their persistence in sowing illusions about the Red peasant movement in the rural districts, which was only a faint and belated echo of the immense revolutionary upsurge of the earlier years, is again largely responsible for the impotence of the Chinese working masses in the present situation. Its revolutionary rebirth will most probably come with a new wave of proletarian struggle in the other countries, and not in the last place, within the Japanese empire itself. At present, it is first beginning to recover from its tragic defeat, under very difficult conditions.

The events in the Far East and the sharpening conflicts among the capitalist nations cannot be considered in themselves. They are part and parcel of the entire economic and social development of the epoch we live in. The world crisis has brought the course of this development into bold relief. The anarchy of capitalist production, based on the profit system alone, can only be maintained by a widening of the market for each capitalist nation. But a widening of the market, in so far as the capitalists are concerned, can only mean the acquisition, in an economic sense at least, of foreign territories. The fact that all territories outside of the capitalist world have already been glutted with capitalist "acquisitions" can only be achieved by sharp struggles among the such new "acquisitions" can only be achieved by sharp struggles among the various imperialists. The conflict between Japan and the United States at the present moment is the most recent illustration of this development. War under our present system can only benefit the imperialists. The workers have no interest in it. While American imperialism is waging a struggle for markets on the one hand, it is making an assault upon the standards of living of its own working class on the other. These two methods represent the two levers of the capitalist solution of the economic crisis. The solution of the working class can only be that of persistent and intransigent struggle against its own bourgeoisie, against its war aims and against its wage-cutting drive.

The capitalist antagonisms, between Japan and the United States, between the United States, France and England, cannot help but lead in their further course, to social convulsions, to revolutionary situations. In the meantime, it is the task of the class conscious workers to prepare themselves, to understand what is going on about them, and to act accordingly.

Alongside with the danger of a war among the imperialists, and not at all in contradiction with it, is the danger of a war against the Soviet Union, against the workers' fatherland. For, aside from being the outpost of the world revolution, which is most odious to the entire capitalist world, the Soviet Union also represents a potential market for capitalist exploitation, while the first danger is most prominent in the Far East, the second centers around Germany. The prerequisite for a capitalist attack on Workers' Russia is the crushing of its most reliable ally, the German working class. And that is why the class conscious worker must pay particular attention to the Fascist menace in that country, the success of which can only mean the destruction of the German proletariat and an immediate attack upon the U. S. S. R.

Sharp solutions of the crisis in the Far East and of the class struggle in Germany are inevitable and close. The first task of the Communists in preparing for the revolutionary situation that will result is to entrench themselves and the influence of Communism among the broad masses of the workers. This can only be done by means of a Leninist united front policy. By patiently explaining to the workers, by sincerely striving for unity in action on the issues of the day, by forcing their reformist leaders into the struggles so that their true and treacherous character will become apparent to the workers—this is the way to prepare the ground for effective action in the revolutionary situation to come, this is the Communist road to the masses.

Secondly, it is necessary to educate the American workers to class consciousness by the concrete example of socialist construction in the Soviet Union. This can best be done by linking up the magnificent successes of socialist planning in the U. S. S. R. With the struggle against the misery brought about by capitalist anarchy, by linking up the absolute need for international solidarity in the work going on in the Soviet Union with the fight against unemployment in this country. The Left Opposition in this purpose long ago proposed the slogan of long term credits to Soviet Russia, with which to buy machinery needed for the fulfillment of the five year plan, and which in turn means Soviet contracts for American factories and a considerable measure of relief to thousands of American unemployed workers.

Thirdly, it is necessary to exert all forces to imbue the working class with militant internationalism. To constantly stress that only the international fighting solidarity of the proletariat can once and for all free it from the yoke of capitalism. Concretely, to explain to them every day what it is that blinds their interests up with those of the Soviet Union, of the oppressed peoples of the Far East, with the success or failure of revolution in Germany.

The differences that exist on these questions between the Left Opposition and the Stalinists are differences of historic importance, questions of life and death for the revolutionary movement. To fight against the reactionary theory of socialism in one country which cripples that international solidarity without which the workers in America as well as those in Russia are doomed to defeat; to fight against the Centrist policies and tactics of Stalinist Centrism ("united front from below", "social Fascism", etc.) which abandon the working masses to the reformist fakery; to unfurl the banner of Marxism-Leninism as the guiding light of the revolutionary vanguard, today; when it is being dragged in the mud—the Left Opposition is ready to undergo all the hardships in the world. The persecutions and slanders of the party bureaucracy cannot for a moment hinder us in our historic struggle, in the struggle for a Leninist party, without which there can be no proletarian victory. Confident of the future, the Left Opposition will patiently continue its course, which is the course of regenerating the Communist movement. It is the hardest and most important task of the moment.

—S. G.

Lovestonites Disrupt Rank and File Movement in the A. C. W. Union

The Lovestone Group in the Amalgamated Clothing Workers' Union has for a long time been in search of a suitable ally among the discredited and discarded officials with whom to initiate an "opposition" movement in the A. C. W. administration. The recent developments in the New York A. C. W. organization finally gave birth to a group which is compelled to rise against Hillman and is in need of some protective covering to be able to rally the workers in a sham fight against the Hillman machine.

Hillman has recently effected an economy reorganization of the New York Joint Board as a result of which a number of officials fell out of their positions. Thus the long sought for ally has been found. Between these officials and the Lovestone group known under the name of Progressive Circle, has been created a united front against the Hillman policies in the Amalgamated. A mass meeting of tailors was called to launch a rank and file movement under their leadership. The tailors responded in big numbers. The situation in the industry is deplorable. The intolerable conditions in the shops and the wide spread unemployment are driving the workers to revolt. Any group with a program for improving their conditions and determination for struggle will easily get a following among them. But that was not furnished by this combination.

The Right wing combination from the beginning secured the leadership of the movement having arranged the details of the meeting. The speakers and the resolutions, left no doubt about the character of the movement they were out to create.

The Rank and File Committee (an organization under Party control) who came to the meeting had little difficulty in exposing the character and aims of the combination, that called it. The meeting ended in a commotion without accomplishments. The Lovestone group in a statement published in the Jewish papers, *Forward* and *Day*, accuses the Rank and File Committee of breaking up the meeting.

Who Will Organize the Revolt

The truth is that the Right wing combination adjourned the meeting to suit themselves. The continuance of the meeting would mean its complete discredit and loss of its control. They did not wish to concede to the demand of the Rank and File Committee members for a committee to be elected from the floor because such a committee would displace them from control. Neither were they willing to discuss anything. Their resolution was to be adopted and their leadership recognized. So the "opposition" movement in the A. C. W. has burst like a bubble. It is to be expected that the organizers of it will now adopt

a course that is more in accord with their traditions and aims, that is, to negotiate for positions and powers behind closed doors.

It is characteristic for the Right wing group to find an excuse for their bureaucratic control in the intentions of the Rank and File Committee members to capture the movement. The Rank and File Committee, in spite of its erroneous policies, has the reputation of an honest and sincere group of workers, while the despised Right wing officials have on their record a whole series of crimes which it has committed against the tailors at Hillman's behest, which even the Lovestone cover would not hide. The tailors will not readily follow them, even though they remain inattentive to the Rank and File Committee.

Who will organize the revolt of the tailors in the A. C. W.? This question is constantly heard from the lips of Left wingers. What can be the answer to it? What does the party do to meet the need of organization of a Left wing in the A. C. W.? What is the reason for the failure of the Rank and File Committee in developing a Left wing movement in the A. C. W. In spite of the favorable situation? There seems to be only one explanation. The numerous blunders of the Left wing in the past and the wrong policies pursued by the Needle Trades Industrial Union in the other needle trade branches have had their repercussions in the men's clothing situation. A year or two ago the Lovestonites could not succeed in gathering a handful of workers at their meetings. Their own following in the Amalgamated consists of less than a half a dozen people. Today they are more successful in getting a response among the workers in spite of their association with the discredited elements. The Lovestonites are exploiting to their benefit the false policies of the Party leadership in the trade union movement. It is significant that in their resolutions presented at the meeting emphasis is laid on the necessity of "categorically rejecting all proposals for a split in the Amalgamated". The resolution also urges the "rejection from the ranks of the movements of all persons who are committed to a policy of splitting the Amalgamated or have loyal duties to a dual organization.

The Rank and File Committee, however, has never made clear its policies or adopted a clear cut program for the men's clothing Left wing. Confusion prevails in their own ranks. A great number of them still cherish the idea of splitting the A. C. W. Many among them consider themselves a part of the Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union. The Rank and File Committee in general is marking time, lacking confidence in its own forces in spite of the increasing favorable opportunities for a Left wing movement.

(Continued on page 4)

Shachtman - Tresca Debate

The debate between comrade Shachtman and Carlo Tresca on Communism vs. Anarchism in Spain, the details of which are announced elsewhere in this issue of the *Militant* is an important educational event which is all too rare today in the American Communist movement. In such debates, workers have an opportunity to hear and judge for themselves the programs of the various currents in the labor movement. For Communists, a debate with socialists, anarchists, syndicalists or reformists is an opportunity to present the Communist program to workers who are otherwise difficult to reach and to demonstrate to them the fallacy of their political credos, and even in certain cases, the treachery of their leaders.

In Spain today anarchism, as comrade Trotsky pointed out, has its last historic opportunity to demonstrate whether its program can lead the exploited and oppressed masses to its emancipation from all slavery, exploitation and war. In the U. S., England, Germany, etc., anarchism is not a factor in the class struggle. But in Spain it is. It has a strong base in the peasantry and is able to set masses into motion. Upon its role in the developing Spanish revolution will depend the final verdict of history over the philosophy and program of anarchism.

Carlo Tresca is a well known anarchist, and is a recognized spokesman for anarchism. Comrade Shachtman is particularly well equipped to discuss the question by virtue of his recent four weeks' stay in Spain.

Glotzer Tour Meets Success

The best meeting yet held for the Left Opposition in Chicago is the report of comrade Glotzer's lecture, Sunday Feb. 28, on the prospects of the revolutionary movement in Europe. About 150 workers attended the meeting participating in an excellent discussion after the lecture. This attendance really defied all the efforts of the local party leaders to prevent its success.

Instructions had previously been issued to all party units that no member was to attend Glotzer's meeting on pain of disciplinary action for any violation of this rule. A special party observer was selected to attend, and to attend alone in order to check up on possible recalcitrants. However, the observer failed to put in an appearance while the workers showed up in good numbers eager to head what the Left Opposition representative had to say.

From Boston the tour went to Montreal, Canada. In that city we have no regular organization. Nevertheless it became possible to gather a small meeting of about 30 Communists which resulted in more convinced supporters for our platform. Toronto was the next stop. The handicap to be surmounted in that city are already known to our readers. The reactionary drive against all working class and revolutionary activities now pursued by the capitalist government is particularly aiming to suppress all semblance of freedom of speech and of assembly. Under these conditions a meeting could be arranged only under the greatest difficulties. Nevertheless there was an attendance of about 60 workers, including a good many official party members and close party sympathizers.

In Buffalo comrade Glotzer spoke under the auspices of the local branch of the Proletarian Party Opposition group. While not the most effective advertisement was made, nevertheless fifty workers attended, including some official Party members. Discussion with these P. P. Opposition group comrades have already served to clarify their understanding of our position. As a result the Buffalo branch is proposing to its national group to orientate itself in the direction of unity with the Communist League of America

Workers of the World, Unite

Workers of the world, unite
You have nothing to lose but your chains
You have a world to win
Workers of the world, unite