

# LETTERS FROM THE MILITANTS

## Oppositionist Seated at Philly Conference

**PHILADELPHIA, PA.**

The Philadelphia "United Front Anti-Terror Conference" called by the International Labor Defense met on June 16 at Friends Meeting House. The meeting opened at nine o'clock with thirty people, delegates and visitors, present. After the chairman, the secretary and a joint credentials committee were elected, the I. L. D. organizer reported. He told the purpose of the meeting and depicted the current police terror against the workers and the curbing of the well-known "constitutional guarantees". A prepared organizational report was presented. Mimeographed copies were given to the delegates. It called for the ordinary methods of organization and propaganda work, dealt with a demonstration on July 4 and a petition campaign against the state Sedition Act.

The floor was opened for discussion of the report. Leon Goodman was the delegate of the local branch of the Communist League of America (Opposition) and began the discussion. The capitalist terror is not unexpected to Communists. The vanguard bears the brunt of attack now. This is a prelude to a broadened attack on the whole class. It is impelled by sheer necessity to defend itself. By defending every single case, the workers protect their own interests. Thus the case of Mooney symbolizes labor's enslavement.

To reach and organize the workers we must take advantage of every avenue of "democracy" open to us under this capitalist system. The plan for a demonstration of July 4 is most fitting. Whatever legality the movement has must be defended. We should learn the lessons of the recent Canadian experiences. After a false start, the I. L. D. there adopted the united front policy as the only means to defend the movement. The conference there changed its name to "conference for the repeal of section 98" and approached the A. F. of L. unions and other organizations with some success. But a full and whole-hearted, consistent approach is needed.

Goodman proposed that since the meeting was not really a conference at all, it constitute itself a preliminary conference to call a real united front conference of all working class organizations to meet shortly before July 4—which should mobilize further for the demonstration and the other work outlined. Further—that the name "Anti-Terror Conference" is not the best, it did not fit in with the elementary duty of the conference, and should be changed since it is misleading. He proposed to take the name "United Front Conference to Defend Workers' Free Speech". Then it will be clear to all that we will be defending the rights of workers to meet, to speak and to organize. The defense of these rights will necessarily be a defense against capitalist terror. Goodman told the meeting that in all the work outlined by the conference, his organization, the Communist League (Opposition) would give its whole-hearted support.

When he had finished and another delegate had spoken, the chairman announced that there was an original proposal of the committee to call another conference June 30. He then left the room to meet with the committee. No one knew what for? There was little discussion. Comrade Holmes denied the advisability of changing the name of the conference. He said in substance that the struggle for free speech, etc., was not as broad and inclusive as the term anti-terror; and that the main work of the conference would in any case be for the defense of workers' free speech. He called attention to the fact that two of the three slogans dealt directly with workers' rights. No more was said by any of the other delegates.

The credentials and resolution committee reported that there were represented 54 delegates of 35 organizations with a total membership of 7,500 workers. Twelve I. L. D. branches, two A. F. L. locals, three T. U. U. L. unions, three political organizations and fifteen fraternal bodies.

Goodman rose at once to ask what were the names of the "political organizations". The information was stubbornly refused. The committee in charge, old Lovestonete bureaucrats, adepts at "hiding the name of the party", were here trying to hide the name of Communist League (O.), in order later to say—no delegate was present. Goodman asked that the names of the organizations be read. A vote was taken, 22 for, 7 against.

The 7 votes surprised the bureaucrats, and after some delegates had taken the floor again on this, the chairman, Bill Lawrence, made a turn about face—gave his stamp to it and took a vote again. This time 28 voted to read the names. The names surprised no one. The usual list—Lithuanian Chorus, Jewish Workers Club, etc., Unions—2, A. F. L. locals, 3 T. U. U. L. The Communist party, the Y. C. L. and, reluctantly, the name Communist League (O.), were drawn from the list. No delegate took the hint of the chairman, for any objections to any organization, and all delegates were declared seated.

Resolutions against the Dies Bill, against the Flynn Sedition Act and for the release of Lawrence, Roth and Adams, etc., were unanimously passed; as were various other telegrams of protest to the mayor and the governor. A resolution and motion Goodman introduced based on his proposals was defeated. The chairman warned him not to "bulldoze" the meeting when he insisted on a vote on his resolution.

—L. G.

## Party's N. Y. State Nominating Convention

**BUFFALO, N. Y.**

We have just returned from the party's state nominating convention at Schenectady. It must be said that we left the convention with very little inspiration. One can't continue to get enthusiastic over omnipresent monolithism. And that was just how dead this gathering was. For all the concrete things achieved there, the convention might just as well have been held in Astrakhan or for that matter, in Oshkosh.

There were about 400 delegates, hermetically sealed Stalinists "representing" the International Workers Order, the I. L. D. and other kosher mass organizations. Prominent among the big shots were the old goose master, I. Amter, Wobbling William Weinstone, etc., who are filling the higher places in the party market.

Things dragged along in the usual manner with the same soap box speeches and the same sectarian narrowness. No local issues were raised, in spite of all the theses and resolutions about "linking up". No concrete tasks were outlined. The "leaders" seemed to be intent to restrict themselves to implanting illusions in the delegates concerning the possible election successes. The burning international situation, the crystal-clear Fascist danger in Germany, did not receive even a moment of attention.

Instead, all the picayune and petty gestures were employed to illustrate the general line. Thus, for instance, the rigid insistence on the nomination of negro candidates by white comrades and vice versa. This seems to be the best way the Stalinists know of applying a correct tactic toward the Negro question. Many comrades are frankly disgusted with this comedy. They realize that it is first of all necessary to have a serious attitude to approach the problem of the unity of the white and the black workers. Some remarked about the sterile, schematic way in which the party treats this problem and mumbled something—in jest—about the "dialectic" capacities of the leadership.

But the spice of the program was Amter's proposal to put forward the slogan "to postpone the war so as to give the Russian comrades an opportunity to entrench socialism". We have become so accustomed to Amter's phantasies that even this gem got by without a ripple. A comrade told us that if Amter brings this slogan out into the open, he would fight it to the last ditch. This is just about the limit of absurdity. No serious party comrade is going to swallow such a ridiculously pacifist slogan. And it would not at all be surprising if a fight around this slogan will evoke a sort of a general denouement of the theory of socialism in one country.

Another Stalinist convention—another peg in the coffin of Stalinism. The impasse of the bureaucratic leadership is becoming more and more apparent. Rest assured, the ranks will not remain quiet. The Left Opposition even is due for

some surprises—and not at all unpleasant ones at that.

—PARTY MEMBER.

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## The Recent Beet Strike in Colorado

The strike of 18,000 beet workers in Colorado is something new in that branch of agriculture! We have seen before the united efforts of beet farmers, seeking better contracts with the Great Western Sugar Co., which were hailed by A. F. of L. bureaucrats as efforts in unionism. We have seen before politicians and child welfare societies agitating against (?) the enslavement and exploitation of five and six year old children in the beet fields of Colorado. We have seen the fruit of their demagoguery, the federal law against child labor, unconstitutionalized by the Supreme Court of the U. S.

The strike was not a well organized one, it is true. Shortcomings in defense and relief work were numerous. Certainly the strategy of the strike appeared not to have been planned at all. But what was important and new and vital was that it was not a petty bourgeois farmer nor a self-seeking politician proposition in this instance: it was a strike of the proletarians themselves, the unskilled, "backward", highly exploited sugar beet workers!

There can be no doubt that had the strike been well planned and prepared and quickly enough and sufficiently supported by other working class organizations it would have constituted a far greater impetus to further class action not only in this, but also in other branches of agriculture in the irrigated districts of the southwest; but the working class organizations by and large neither understood its importance nor, to this day, realize its place in the building of the new unions.

The Trade Union Unity League, which led the strike, puzzled and confused from zig-zagging on the industrial field, neither grasped nor conveyed this meaning from analyses of the whole situation or from the living logic that brought onion workers in the same district into strike activity at the same time.

All of which makes it necessary that the reasons why this strike is their first page in a whole chapter of new unionism and strike struggle, especially in the southwest, be made known.

—L. G.

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## The Recent Beet Strike in Colorado

The workers involved are primarily Mexicans against whom there is nearly as much prejudice as there is against the Negro agricultural workers of the south. Throughout the irrigated districts of Colorado, Nebraska, Wyoming and Utah they not only work the sugar beets but pick the vegetables: peas, beans, tomatoes etc., that supply the many canning factories for which these parts are famous. For months they camp in the pickle fieldseking out a mere existence for themselves while piling up wealth for Keener and Heinz. They pick the potatoes and the fruits.

If it is true that "America lives out of tin cans" then it is true that the Mexican section of the working class can give direct blows to the stomach of the American economic system, can close the canning factories for want of supplies, pickle factories for the same reason, the many sugar factories, can leave the potatoes rot in the ground. If the Mexican agricultural workers have anywhere near the same qualities the Mexican coal miners in Colorado had in 1927 and still have—and the best workers' strike unorganized as it was, militant enough to indicate that they have—then the proletarian qualities of these "hot blooded" Latinos argues in favor of further battles and new unionism.

The A. F. of L. has never got to first base with the Mexican workers, even with those in the coal mines. Their methods and tactics fit neither the needs nor the temperaments of this people. Should the A. F. of L., even at this late date, attempt to organize the agricultural workers it is not likely they would include the Mexicans as there is too much prejudice against them. For the same reason the A. F. of L. Jim-crows the Negro, refuses to "stir up the race question", etc. It will continue its policy of accusing, excluding, and working against the Mexican workers.

The Mexican worker lines up and fights for industrial unionism. Militant leadership is the only leadership he follows. Communist leadership is the leadership that will trample down the prejudice against him and against the Negro workers who will be in the same organizational movement—and in vast numbers—in the states of Texas and Oklahoma when the new awakening spreads that far.

—G. SAUL.

## The Drug Clerks and the Class Struggle

It is obvious, that the principal task of the leadership of the Drug Clerks Union consists primarily in dispelling the illusion of professionalism, which is so greatly hampering the development and orientation of the drug clerk toward unionism, and raise him to the level of a class conscious worker. But, to perform this colossal task, the present leadership is particularly incapable.

The executive board, in order to cover up the tremendous gap between its position as a leader and its inability to lead, garbs itself in a cloak of secrecy. When a rank and file asked the secretary, at the last membership meeting, to state the reasons for not reading the minutes of the executive meetings, she answered that, "certain methods of organization were discussed, which cannot be divulged at present." Of course an organization at times must recognize the right of a leading body to deal with matters confidentially. At present, the truth is, the same manner as a doctor serves an empty container in a window-display: to convey an impression of genuine merchandise. The minds of the executive members are not only bare of any "secret methods" but are perfect vacuums, as far as methods of building a union are concerned. "When a secret is kept too long it becomes no secret", say the old folks. The executive has been secretive too long and has, naturally, aroused the suspicion of the membership as to the real motive behind the secrecy. Disillusionment followed; and their confidence in the leadership has been badly shaken. Hence the present state of apathy among the members.

The elementary method to disperse the suffocating illusion of professionalism among the drug clerks consists, quite obviously, in holding membership and educational meetings as often as possible, in order to present an opportunity to an ever greater number of members and non-members to express their views on matters pertaining to the existence and growth of the union. And in this manner attract their interest, arouse their enthusiasm, and direct this nascent enthusiasm into chambers of organizational activities, which will serve as motive power for the further progress and growth of the organization. The executive, however, has done the exact reverse. It has called meetings in an arbitrary manner; it is only at the last membership meeting that a motion was passed to hold membership meetings regularly, once a month. Until then, meetings were held whenever the executive needed the official sanction of the membership on some matter. For instance, the last membership meeting was called to ratify a certain "collective agreement", about which I shall write at another opportunity.

It must be quite obvious that the first stage of organizational activities of the union, i. e., the transition from its amorphous state into an organized, unified and compact body, is far from being completed. As a matter of fact, it has not yet begun. To skip this stage and pass over to its second stage, i. e., to establish the union as a bona fide workers body and demand recognition from their bosses, is an adventurous move that is sure to meet disaster on its way.

The present so-called strike is an attempt by the executive board to skip the first stage of organizational activities and plunge into the second stage which may prove fatal to the feeble structure of the union.

The ushering in of the second stage of organized activities of a developing union on a yet unorganized industrial field is usually signalized by the clarion call of a general strike. However, a general strike of drug clerks, in times of an ever sharpening crisis and under conditions of a declining drug industry, presupposes not only the rallying of a decisive majority of licensed and junior clerks under the banner of the union but also the unqualified, organized support of the soda-fountain and luncheonette workers, who operate an important branch of the drug store business today. It goes without saying, that a capable revolutionary leadership is an unconditional prerequisite for its possible success.

A well organized minority of drug clerks, however, can and should develop a real struggle AGAINST WAGE CUTS AND LONG HOURS in one or two stores. Such a struggle will necessarily draw the membership into the activities of the strike: picketing, distributing circulars, organizing "open-air" meetings, etc., which will teach them a valuable lesson in the class struggle and free their minds from the fetters of professionalism—the greatest obstacle on their road toward consciousness.

Moreover, such a strike will touch a sore spot in the hearts of the unorganized clerks, arouse their sympathy and cause them to gravitate toward unionism. In this manner, the union will augment its forces and give greater assurance to the success of the strike and its spreading to other establishments. Even in case of failure, which might result from the crushing pressure of the brutal law of the club and the injunction, it will disillusion them only with the "democracies" of capitalism rather than with the feasibility of organized resistance. It will only give rise to new methods of struggle.

However, to attempt to "throw a picket at the door", in order to compel the bosses to recognize the union and the clerks, "to join it up", is a method of organization entirely inimical to working class organization strategy. This "make 'em join" strategy was originated and has been used by the A. F. of L. bureaucracy; it is the incarnation of its utter contempt for the working masses, and

al and in the union in particular is rather questionable.

(c) Mr. George Sherman, brother of Mr. Louis Sherman, is a leading member of the Executive Board and parades under the name of Gerson. He is not a Pharmacist, but a petty swindler, pure and simple. These facts, MUST AND WILL BE EXPOSED before the membership at the coming meeting, which will undoubtedly lead to the downfall of the Sherman dynasty. However, the consequences of the upheaval cannot yet be foreseen.

J. DREYER.

## MILITANT BUILDERS

With Problems of the Chinese Revolution as a premium with a year's sub to the Militant it should be fairly simple to get subs. Every Militant Builder on his toes! It's touch and go from now on! We expect to clean out the whole edition in eight weeks, the bulk of it in six weeks, or just about the time What Next? comes off the press. After that the book will be unavailable.

What sympathizer of ours can resist such an offer? And what serious Left wing worker can fail to consider it? It is entirely up to us to produce results. And for that all that is needed now is a little energy. We speak from experience. It is really astonishingly easy.

52 issues of the Militant and 450 pages of comrade Trotsky at his best on the Chinese question! A good percentage of the population of Minneapolis should fall under the sustained attack that they are planning up there. And in New York—we will let the result speak for themselves. From Youngstown, from Cleveland, from all over come signs that with the book as a lever we will increase the circulation of the Militant.

Some time ago we became committed to the idea that we were going forward with building the circulation of the Militant. That is we set ourselves the necessary task going forward steadily without downward curves in the graph of our progress. Thus far we can record a steady, if slow, rise. The growing staff and its record prove that:

O. Coover	5
M. Beardslee	5
C. R. Hedlund	5
M. Koehler	3
A. Basky	2 1-2
J. SCOTT	2
M. Bastin	2
P. Vomvas	2
J. Eichna	2
C. Curtis	2
A. Ehrlich	2
M. Reinal	2
J. Keller	2
W. Klitt	2
M. Goldman	1

The record by branches is as follows:

New York	13 1-4
Minneapolis	9
Cleveland	5
Pittsburgh	4
Chicago	3
Youngstown	3
St. Louis	2
Kansas City	2
Philadelphia	2
Miscellaneous	2

## Wage Cut for Federal Gov't Workers

The salaries of the Federal civil service employees have come under the knife. As part of the general wage cutting drive and the campaign for cheaper government, \$12,000,000 has been slashed from the wages of the federal workers at one fell stroke by the U. S. Congress. After weeks of anxious deliberation the legislators summoned up enough courage to put through the wage cut, under the trick name of the "furlough bill." Like the bonus veterans the civil service workers crowded every space in the chambers and galleries of the senate to watch their trusted representatives apply the axe to their payroll.

They were watching a little show which is the first act of unsating the government employees from their throne of privilege. The strongholds of the labor aristocracy are being broken down with unremitting consistency. First the skilled workers who managed to escape the ruthless advance of the new machine inventions, were caught in the wage cut drive that was the reward for their docility, class collaborationism, and business union ventures during the period of "prosperity". And now civil service workers are getting their compensation for their patient service to the capitalist government in the form of slashes in their envelope. The road is being cleared for a unified and homogeneous working class movement that will cut across all the traditional prejudices and strata of the proletariat.

While the current economic crisis means no good for the workers in a material way it is a veritable boon for the capitalist masters. The ruling class not only takes advantage of the huge unemployed army to scale down the standard of living but to put the screws to their henchmen who run the government for them. They want cheaper and more efficient government. The time is over, they say, when they can afford to squander money on their lackeys. The leading imperialist government of the world, with a battle on its hands for markets and colonies and a discontented working class which must be held in check, needs a bureaucracy which will do its work efficiently—on rations. During the last few years preceding the crisis the expenditures and corruption of the federal gov't ran the treasury into a deficit of several hundreds of millions of dollars. This must be made up somehow. Certainly, the Wall Street mag-

nates do not intend to pay for this out of their own profits. After squeezing the petty bourgeoisie dry in the stock crash they milked what remained of their rapidly vanishing wealth by the imposition of a heavy load of new taxes. But this is not enough. Consequently the white collar slaves came in for a well rounded trimming.

The bill reducing the wages of the government employees is an interesting commentary on the hypocrisy the capitalist lickspittles, of the republican and democratic parties alike, peddle off in the name of philanthropy. The very name of the bill is indisputable proof of this.

It is called the "Furlough Plan". This means that instead of an outright and brazen wage cut, the federal employees are given a month's vacation during the year—without pay, of course. It is reasoned, we suppose, that since all the workers, nowadays are on a more or less permanent holiday there is no ground to discriminate against the Washington office workers. The bill is so calculated as to put all those earning slightly more than \$1,000 per annum on the five day week with a corresponding reduction of pay, and on enough vacations to bring their salaries down to the one thousand mark. The bill even reaches out to the country-side to hit the rural mail carriers for an 8 1-3% cut and a one-eighth cut on their allowance for vehicles. This measure will no doubt, do its bit to remove these people from the "idiotcy of rural life." It will help to make this backward section of the working class more class conscious.

Another hypocritical gesture of the bill is the 15 percent reduction made in the huge salary of the vice-president (evidently the value of Curtis's sleeping performances have declined in the crisis deflation), and the 10 per cent cut in the \$10,000 salaries of the congressmen. Who can say our legislators are not self-sacrificing?

The unmistakable identity of the republicans and democrats is shown by their attitude towards the civil service workers. Only the republicans were more "radical" in this instance. The democrats wanted an outright cut in wages while the G. O. P. preferred to camouflage the cut with the "furlough plan". The republicans were the stronger, so the democrats compromised and helped the former trim the office workers.

—CLARKE.