

The Crisis in the A. C. W.

Independent Clothing Workers Union Formed in Canada

In the July issue of the *Advance*, official organ of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union we read a report of a ten percent wage cut put over on the Philadelphia membership through the decision of the "Impartial Chairman", Judge Stern. This wage cut is one of the seasonal wage cuts that are foisted upon the membership of the A. C. W. by official agreement with the Clothing Manufacturers Association, in addition to the unceasing wage reductions in the shops that are not recorded.

It has been the accepted theory and practice of the A. C. W. that all disputes between it and the clothing manufacturers are settled by arbitration. Hillman has made this system renowned, as the last word of the "higher labor strategy" in contradistinction to the "uncivilized", "jungle" method of the strike.

To our great amazement however, we read further in connection with the above wage cut in Philadelphia the following ponderous editorial remarks:

Hillman's New "Militancy"

"It is all turning in a vicious circle. The Philadelphia manufacturers, of course, want the wage cut for whatever cash value it has. But they also want it as an advertising device. They can tell the trade press and the buyers that labor now being cheaper, they can turn out better quality goods for the same money or the same quality for less money. So they get the advantage and use it. And there the vicious circle begins. First Chicago and Rochester wanted reductions to enable them to compete with New York and Philadelphia. They got what they wanted. Now Philadelphia must have a further wage reduction to enable it to compete with Chicago, Rochester and New York. The next in line is New York! It must compete with Philadelphia. Then presumably Chicago and Rochester will follow. . . ."

"The game will have to be stopped sooner or later. Perhaps later will be late and the industry will have gone to the dogs. The game will not be stopped by holy incantations or righteous indignation. It is up to the union and the union only. It may not be in a position today, so it must prepare for the task—today, tomorrow, every day. Not impartial arbitration but more union power is the court of last resort. Accounts will be squared even though it may take time and effort."

What has become of that "higher labor strategy" to which are attributed all the "achievements" of the A. C. W., and on which Hillman prides himself on every occasion? Has not Hillman by the grace of this "higher labor strategy" gained recognition and prestige among manufacturers, politicians, judges senators, the clergy et al? The monumental achievements of the A. C. W. in the sphere of "civilization" are recalled with pride by Hillman and his lieutenants not only on the pages of trade union journals but also, and more so, in the capitalist press. The Amalgamated "Labor" banks (which serve loans to the clothing firms and thereby assume responsibility for their stability at the expense of the workers); the cooperative houses (where dwellings are provided for the union officials and business people); the unemployment insurance schemes (which serve as a means to insure the high salaries of the officials); and above all the famous "impartial machinery" to settle disputes in the industry and avoid strikes, are held up by Hillman and the bosses alike as a model to be copied by the rest of the labor unions.

I recall an editorial that appeared in a New York liberal paper some time ago in which the Amalgamated system of unemployment insurance was cited as an example of a successful solution of the unemployed problem. According to that editorial the A. C. W. membership were receiving as much as eighty percent, four-fifths of their average wages (and their wages, as you know are very high). The editor, of course, obtained his information

directly through Hillman's offices. So what has become of all these great "achievements" and the class collaboration methods which are responsible for them? Have they failed? Has Hillman decided to discard the "civilized" methods and turn to more union power, to the "court of last resort"? Does he really intend to "square accounts", even though "only in the future"? If anyone thinks so on the basis of the hypocritical pronouncements of his lickspittle editor on the *Advance*, he is simply a fool or a novice.

Collapse of "Higher Strategy"

The Hillman bureaucracy feels that all the things mentioned above are already too well known and properly evaluated, especially by the A. C. W. members themselves. The "higher labor strategy" of the Hillman bureaucracy, which so closely tied it to the clothing manufacturers and gained a high reputation, prestige and medals for Hillman in the bourgeois world, have brought starvation, slavery, demoralization and despair to the tens of thousands of clothing workers. There is hardly a clothing center, here or in Canada, where the clothing workers have not had the opportunity to get a taste of Hillman's "civilized" union methods. And many of them are already beginning to react to these methods in a direct and efficacious manner.

The Amalgamated bureaucracy feels the bankruptcy of its "higher labor strategy". It feels it considerably and substantially. It feels it financially and organizationally. Its prestige is falling precipitately: both with the manufacturers and the workers. Its banks are crashing. Local unions and centers are rebelling. They openly break away from the A. C. W. decaying body. The Hillman bureaucracy is experiencing a sinking of the foundation under its feet. It must seek a way of rescuing itself. Hence this talk of a change of tactics. Hence the hypocritical references to struggles. . . . "in the future". This is essentially the purport of the ponderous remarks of the mandaculous, hypocritical sheet, paradoxically called *Advance*. It is peridly multiplied by crass insolence. It will not mislead anybody.

On the same page of the same issue of the *Advance*, a slanderous attack is made on the new Clothing Workers Union recently formed in Montreal, Canada, out of the former Amalgamated locals. This new union was born in the open revolt of the membership against the A. C. W. bureaucracy for their granting of wage cuts, their terroristic methods, expulsions, and so forth. The patience of the membership reached the breaking point. First the pressers threw into the face of the A. C. W. officialdom their union "protection" and the benefits of the A. C. W. and quit the union. They were followed by the operators and tailors who jointly organized themselves into the All-Canadian Clothing Workers Union. This new union has practically succeeded in wresting control from the Amalgamated in the clothing centers of Canada and is proceeding with further plans of organization.

Hillman Sunk in Montreal

The strategy of the Hillman bureaucracy did not avail. The manufacturers have not long enjoyed the benefit of the wage cuts, relieved from Hillman as the pride of union recognition. Of no avail were also the terror and the shrewd, tricky maneuvers of the Hillman agents who sought to save their dominance over the workers. When the Hillman agents, in order to save the sinking Amalgamated ship, at the eleventh hour made promises of union democracy and better protection only to keep the tailors from leaving the Amalgamated, it was already too late. The tailors had already crossed the threshold. To make them come back was impossible. The Amalgamated ship in Montreal had sunk.

The attacks on the All-Canadian Clothing Workers Union have, as it is evi-

dent, been conceived out of the impotency of the Hillman bureaucracy to save its hold on the Canadian organizations and are naturally expressive of that mood. That is why it accuses the new union of granting bigger and better wage cuts to the manufacturers! (They only regret that they could not succeed with such methods.) "Obviously", writes the *Advance*, "our organization cannot compete in this policy of unlimited reductions. We are not interested in being a preferred company union." (They prefer to have the monopoly.) "It is the business of the union to play a protective part in the bargain between the union and the employer and not merely to be sanctioning every demand of the employer!" (Does it really do it?)

Has the editor forgotten what he has written in the previous column about the present policies of the Amalgamated and the "vicious circle" the Amalgamated is in, due to these policies? But this is impossible. One might think that in Montreal, at least, the A. C. W. pursued different tactics. But here we read in the declaration of the Committee of 50 that conducted the struggle against the A. C. W. bureaucracy in Montreal, the following:

"If you are not familiar with the methods of the Hillman agents, give your attention to this example: 'Samuelson's is an open shop. Some time before the boss was paying \$3.25 for making a garment. The business agent of the A. C. W. came along and offered the boss to cut the price to \$2.25. The condition was that the employer force the workers to join the Amalgamated and collect dues from them. The boss' lawyer demanded a written agreement. The union did not sign the agreement because the firm is still in possession of an injunction procured against the Amalgamated some time before. The price of the garment, however, as a re-

sult of this incident, was reduced. Hillman's agents ran the show in Montreal by vicious terror. . . . The subterranean opposition in the Amalgamated has only been organized a year ago. Why had the opposition to be secret? . . ."

Autocracy in the Union

"More than four years ago the Amalgamated leadership had made a pogrom on all the Left and progressive tailors. They were thrown out of the union and deprived of their jobs. When the Lefts had been chased out of the trade, the problems in the union still remained. The Left-baiters became the persecuted of tomorrow for their open criticism of the self-rulership of the Amalgamated bureaucrats. . . . Democracy was abolished! Elections for local officials were a farce. Workers had to vote for candidates of the cliques. This was only for the Executive and Joint Boards. No elections for paid officials had been held for the last five years. They were appointed by a Hillman agent" and so forth.

The lies and slanders of Hillman and his sycophants of the *Advance* will not stop the revolt of the tailors in Canada and elsewhere. Their deeds are already too well known. As regards the new union in Canada we may hope that the tailors there have learned enough from their experience with the Hillman bureaucracy and its "civilized" union methods of class collaboration not to let themselves be led into a new swamp by the leaders of the All-Canadian Congress with which the new union has been affiliated. They must remain on guard for their interests and build a foundation for a real class struggle union. Only then will they have achieved a great historical task in the interests of the masses of tailors and the labor movement in general. Only then will their revolt against the A. C. W. be fully justified.

—ALBERT ORLAND.

The Civil War in Chile

Motive Forces Behind South American «Revolutions»

We have witnessed recently a series of "revolutions" in Chile, expressing themselves in the overthrow of several governments. First of all, the military, ultra-reactionary dictatorship of Ibanez was supplanted by Montero. The latter's regime was overthrown, in turn by Davila in conjunction with part of the military camarilla of which Col. Marmaduke Grove is one of the outstanding representatives. Constituting itself a "revolutionary" junta and declaring itself to be a "socialist" government, the Davila clique later renounced their original views as too radical.

Marmaduke Grove, who has been employing even more demagogical phrases of an "anti-imperialist" character, for a short time succeeded to power in place of Davila. Whereupon the latter broke with the "revolutionary" junta altogether and prepared another coup d'Etat which was crowned with success. As we are writing these lines, Grove and his followers have been exiled and Davila is master of the Chilean household. On the one hand, he plays around with ideas of a fake working class and "socialist" character. On the other, he has initiated a most brutal persecution against the proletarian revolutionary organizations. The Communist party and the red trade unions have been declared illegal and according to information furnished by the bourgeois press, hundreds of Communists have been arrested and deported.

We must pose before us the question: What are the reasons for these continual "revolutions" resulting in changes of regime of such an instable character? And what are the causes for the "radical

demagogy which makes up the political baggage of the various factions fighting for power? The answer to these questions, we find in the semi-colonial character of the national economy of Chile, which has been going through a veritably catastrophic downward development in recent years as a consequence of the deep world crisis in the capitalist system. This economic crisis has been transformed into a sharp political crisis which has penetrated the entire life of the nation. Discontent is extending to all parts of the population. In order to be able to give a better grasp of the real import of the present situation in Chile, we shall review in brief the state of its national economy and the effect of the world crisis on it.

Chile is one of the most industrialized countries in Latin America, but the structure of its economy bears a semi-colonial and mono-productive character. The basic industry of the country is the nitrate industry. Copper is next in importance. Nitrates represent 46 per cent of its total exports and copper 34 per cent. This shows us to what degree the national economy is dependent upon these two products.

The nitrate industry has been badly shaken for years. The international agrarian crisis has exercised a strong check on the nitrate market through the decreased demand for fertilizers. Another cause is the high development in the production of synthetic nitrates. The coup d'Etat of Ibanez in 1927 was an attempt on the part of the national bourgeoisie to overcome this crisis under the leadership of American imperialism by introducing methods of rationalization in production, leading to the shifting of the burden of the crisis to the shoulders of the working class. To this end, Ibanez applied a fierce persecution against even the most elementary organizations of the proletariat.

The brutal rationalization which culminated in the reorganization of the nitrate industry took place under the leadership of the Cosach trust, dominated in turn by American capital. The government ceded to this trust all the nitrate fields owned by the state, at the same time exempting it from the export tax. These privileges granted to the Cosach outfit by the government made possible the existence of enterprises standing outside of the trust. In this manner the British, Yugoslav and Chilean, etc. companies were forced to enter into the trust. Production which had increased considerably in the first years of the Ibanez dictatorship, has suffered of late, an enormous decrease, in which overproduction is the determining factor, although the intentions of the trust to maintain the price level also have their effect.

This can be seen from the following figures. In December 1922, production stood at 285,000 tons. In September 1930, at 185,000 tons. We have no recent data on hand, but there can be no doubt that with the sharpening of the crisis, production has decreased much more yet. As a consequence of all this, more than half the workers in the industry are out of jobs.

While the nitrate industry is divided up among the capitalists of the various countries, the copper industry is almost entirely in the hands of Yankee capital. As a result of the crisis, this industry is working at about two thirds of its capacity. Prices have fallen in alarming proportions. Thousands of workers have been thrown out of work and those who are still working have had their wages reduced 40 per cent. The nitrate and copper crisis has been converted into a national crisis. The situation in the other industries follows closely along the same lines. The crisis has gripped with just as disastrous consequences the coal and the transport industries. Commerce and agriculture are likewise caught in its grip.

The unstable economic structure of Chile, which must depend upon its external market so lavishly, is manifest in the present economic crisis and its political implications. The struggle between the imperialists, the weakness of the national bourgeoisie, the parasitic role it plays as the prostitute servant of whatever imperialism has more to offer, also calls forth the instability of the governmental camarillas, the "revolutions", the constant intrigues in which the representatives of the various imperialist powers participate. The heterogeneous character of the ruling class further aggravates the vacillations of the political power and create the ground for military dictatorships and reactionary regimes known for their fierce persecution not only of the working class but also of their political adversaries in the contending bourgeois cliques.

This accounts for the continual "revolutions", not only in Chile but in all of Latin America. In Chile it merely came to a sharper point than elsewhere. The crisis is more acute there and results in a sharpening of the class struggle, expressed in strikes and working class demonstrations. This state of development of the class struggle also explains the "proletarian" demagogy and the "anti-imperialist" phrases employed by the different bourgeois camarillas to shout off the strong militant sentiments of the working class along harmless channels. Unfortunately, these sentiments have not reached the point of clear class consciousness. —ALBERTO GONZALEZ.

CORRECTION

In the sixth paragraph of comrade Trotsky's article "Stalinism in Straits; Opposition on Upsurge," on page 1 of our last issue, an unfortunate typographical error was made. It reads: "The general line is incorrect, but the executors are poor." It should read, of course: "The general line is correct, but the executors are poor."

The Stalinists and the Waterfront Work

NEW YORK—

For the last five years the Communist party and the Trade Union Unity League have been functioning on the waterfront in New York and the other ports of the U. S. A. The writer has come to the conclusion that after five years of work among the seamen and harbor workers, the time has come when it is absolutely necessary seriously to take an account of what has been accomplished during this period. What have been our gains? What our losses? What influence have we got over the seamen, harbor workers and longshoremen? What has actually been achieved?

Have we a strong, fighting, industrial union? Have we engaged in important struggles? Do the seamen and longshoremen come to us for leadership in their struggle? Are they ready to fight under our banner?

A truthful answer to the above questions, everyone involved will have to admit, can be given only in the negative. We must then ask ourselves, why haven't we any substantial influence? What is wrong?

Has our policy toward the seamen and harbor workers been correct? Again the correct answer is, no. The picards and bureaucrats will say: We have got influence, but times are bad. Take no notice of these social-Fascists and counter-revolutionary Trotskyists, etc.

Fiasco of Bureaucrats

Answers like these will not, however, explain away the fact that after five years on the waterfront there are not five functioning ship committees in the whole U. S. Mercantile Marine. No dock committee whatever. No fraction in reformist I. L. A. or any of the other existing unions in New York City and elsewhere.

The Minks and the other bureaucrats will point to their success with the River Boat Men of Stockton, California. But they cannot cover up thereby their fiasco in the criminal handling of the Philadelphia longshoremen's strike, in the New Orleans strike; in the strike on

the Clyde line a few weeks ago, their shameful desertion of Soderberg, Bunker and Trajer, who were seamen after all, good militant marine workers no matter

Why not the 4 Marx Bros.? (Not to Speak of Greta Garbo)

The event for which the American working class has searched the horizon like a stranded mariner, has finally been announced in the public prints. The *Times* of July 15, announces the formation of the American section of the "World Congress Against War" organized by Barbusse and Rolland as a pacifist masquerade for the Comintern. The American Committee is characteristic. Here are the names of some of the people who are to constitute the organizers of the revolutionary movement against imperialist war: Harry Elmer Barnes, liberal historian for the petty bourgeoisie Scripps chain; Upton Sinclair, well-known supporter of peace in peace times and of war during war times; Robert Morris Lovett, another petty bourgeois professor; and Corliss Lamont, the only one of the noted family whom the *Daily Worker* treats with respect. As if this were not enough to form an anti-war center to which the Stalinists give, at the very least, their tacit support, there are also Alla Nazimova, who is undoubtedly a remarkable tragedienne on the stage; Leopold Stokowski who wields a nifty orchestral baton; Lillian Wald, who also pities the poor; and not the least, Thornton Wilder, who now trends the Bridge of San Henri Barbusse.

We ask: Why not the four Marx Brothers? Why not Eddie Cantor, Albertina Rasch and Dorsha? Why not Greta Garbo and the Hall Johnson choir? Why not George Gershwin and Minnie the Mocher? And what about Amos and Andy, Felix the Cat, Israel Amter and Betty Boop-Boop-a-Doop? We don't know if they're all against war or not, and it doesn't matter. But we bet they'll put on a much better show at Geneva.

what their political beliefs may be. These facts cannot be side-stepped. And the workers in the M. W. I. U. must ask themselves: What are we heading for under the present leadership? What has become of the militants who built up the International Seamen's Club, the Marine Workers League and founded the Industrial Union? Why is Harvey, for instance, in the coal fields? Harvey is a seaman and his place is on the waterfront. Why is McGrath in the Soviet Union? The seamen are organized one hundred per cent over there. They don't need any organizers from the U. S. A. We need all the organizers we can get. We are suffering at present from too much talk about revolution and too little action about organizing.

For a fighting opposition

The seamen and harbor workers ought to ask these questions at the next meeting of the M. W. I. U. The bureaucratic machine cannot be allowed to continue wrecking what has been built up by the militants with their sweat and blood. A fighting opposition has got to be organized, a machine that will counter the machine of the Stalinist wreckers. That is the one way of making our union a real militant, industrial union.

Beware of the Andersons and the other Lovestonite hangers-on who try to buy you with a bowl of greasy stew. Act like union men, the union rightly belongs to you. Organization is the need of the hour, among the seamen as everywhere. But we must organize correctly. We know how to get what we want, not the swivel chair leaders, the Minks, the Andersons, etc.

The class conscious seamen and harbor workers must get busy. There is a lot of organizing to do, if we are to escape the threat of starvation that stares us in the eye. The way to do it is by establishing rank and file control. Get into the union and let us all get together to run out the pic-cards and bureaucrats. We have got to choose leaders with backbones, not fish bones.

—B. F.

Nine Years of the Struggle of the Left Opposition

The Ultra-Left Zig-zag in the Comintern and the «Third Period»

The ultra-left zig-zag in the Russian party, which began after the grain crisis that followed the Fifteenth Congress of the C. P. S. U. at the end of 1927, was very soon projected in a direct line to the whole of the Communist International. This flight of the frightened bureaucrats from yesterday's rank opportunism to adventurism is embraced in what has become known as the "third period"

The Turn at the Ninth Plenum

The arbitrarily defined period does not commence in the Comintern's history with its proclamation at the Sixth Congress, but even more definitely at the 9th Plenum of the C. I. early in 1928. At that time the first signs of a working class resurgence in Europe could be detected, but only the first signs. The vote cast for the Communist parties, particularly in Germany, was increasing, but with it, also, the vote cast for the social democracy. In a number of other countries, however, the working class was either writhing in the pain of a still unsurmounted defeat, as in China, or else passive under the soporific effects of a temporary high conjuncture, as in France and the United States.

The Ninth Plenum, instead of establishing the precise stage of development of the international labor movement, proclaimed the rise of a "new and higher" stage of the Chinese revolution (not counter-revolution, but revolution!), gave its blanket endorsement to guerrilla adventurism, and announced from the mouth

of Thaelmann and the other spokesmen of the Comintern that the working masses throughout the world were becoming "more and more radicalized". The warnings against this light-minded conception of an automatic, horizontal progress of the revolutionary movement, were of no avail, for they were uttered by the Opposition. And comrade Trotsky's clear-sighted analysis of the real status of the movement was not only passed over in silence at the Sixth Congress to which it was presented, but it was not even given to the assembled delegates. His study on this subject, nevertheless remains the first work written against the superficial exaggerations and ultra-Leftism of the post Right wing period of bureaucratic Centrism.

The Sixth Congress in the middle of 1928 carried the Ninth Plenum a few steps further in absurdity. Formally, it marked the culminating point of the collaboration between Centrism and the Right wing (Stalin and Bucharin). Actually, it incorporated into the foundation of the next period a mixture of opportunist premises and ultra-Left deductions which have been at the root of all the confusion and defeats suffered by Communism since that time.

The Sixth Congress had many points of similarity with the Fifth, which was held in 1924 after the defeat in Germany. In 1924, no defeat was acknowledged; on the contrary, the revolution was proclaimed to be right ahead. In

1928, virtually the same atrocious error was made with regard to the Chinese revolution. In the period of the Fifth Congress, Stalin made the novel discovery that the "social democracy was the most moderate wing of Fascism". In 1928, the Sixth Congress laid the basis for the unique philosophy of "social-Fascism". The Fifth Congress celebrated the victory of "Bolshevization" and "monolithism", at a time when the very basis under the various "Bolshevik leaderships" imposed upon the national sections was being undermined. In 1928, the most violent internal struggles were being fought behind the scenes of the "unified Communist International". The Fifth Congress, with all its ultra-Leftist palaver, contained not merely the germs of a brief spurt to the Left but also a protracted swing to the Right, to the period of the Anglo-Russian Committee, of the Chiang Kai-Shek alliance, the Anti-Imperialist League and the "Peasants International". The Sixth Congress, for all its endorsement of adventurist conclusions, consecrated the revisionist theory of socialism in one country and established the slogan of the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry" (that is, the Kerenskiad or the Kuo Min Tang tragedy) as an iron law governing the doctrines of the revolution on three-quarters of the earth.

Stalin and the Right Wing

The struggle against the "Right danger" launched at the Sixth Congress, which Bucharin had resisted only as recently the Fifteenth Congress of the Russian party, was platonic and anonymous. Its value may be estimated from the fact that such a struggle was proclaimed by the international leader of the Right wing, Bucharin, from the Congress tribune. In this manner, the for-

mal unification of the ruling bloc was preserved and used to cover up the bitter internal dispute. It is instructive to observe that at the very time that Stalin was busily engaged in sapping the ground under Bucharin and Co., going so far as to organize an unofficial congress of his own, simultaneously with "Bucharin's Congress", he nevertheless took the leadership in condemning any rumors about disagreements in the Russian party leadership as "Trotskyist slanders". In a special report on the subject made by Stalin himself to the Council of Elders at the Congress, he repudiated all rumors regarding differences in the Russian Political Bureau. He emphatically denied that there were any Right wingers or Right wing views in the Political Bureau or even the Central Committee, and, to confirm his assertions, introduced a resolution, signed by himself and every other member of the Political Bureau which declared:

"The undersigned members of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union declare before the Council of Elders of the Congress that they most emphatically protest against the circulation of rumors that there are dissensions among the members of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the C. P. S. U. Needless to say, the assembled marionettes listened solemnly and approvingly to this criminally ludicrous deception of the Communist International, concocted jointly by Stalin and Bucharin. Everybody at the Congress knew the truth; everybody knew that Stalin was simply lying with a straight face; but unlike the boy in the crowd of obedient and respectful subjects through whom the king was passing, nobody could be found to rise and shout that the king

READ AND SUBSCRIBE TO THE MILITANT