

Opposition at Gillespie

League's Views Triumph at Progressive Miners Conference

(Continued from page 1)

ance, trade union democracy, abolition of high wages for officials, class-struggle policies, relentless fight against labor leaders—all of these and similar demands, which are becoming the fighting program of insurgent workers in every section of the labor movement in all parts of the country, found their place also in the program of the Gillespie Conference. In this fact is to be seen the best basis for the eventual fusion of the Illinois movement with similar movements in other parts of the country into a single national formation. For various reasons this necessary unification of the scattered insurgent elements on a national scale remains to be realized. An organization, or a group of organizations, with sufficient stability and influence to attract the other scattered movements around it is one of the elements still lacking for this national concentration. The Gillespie conference and the forces represented in it could not yet serve this purpose. It could only contribute to the process. But the dynamic potentialities of a great role are there. The developments of the Progressive Miners in Illinois in the coming months may have a decisive bearing, not only the mining situation but also upon the whole Left wing and progressive labor movement of the entire country.

The Progressive Miners Organization

The importance and significance of the Gillespie conference derives primarily from the participation of the Progressive Miners of America. Not only from the top but also from the bottom, from the local unions, the fighting Illinois miners came to rub shoulders with the delegates of other trades and take counsel with them. Here is a heartening sign, one of many signs, that the P. M. A. stands higher and sees farther than the previous district formation of insurgent miners. Still going through its own first birth pangs as a union, the P. M. A. already looks beyond the borders of its own industry and seeks alliance with the workers of other trades. And the participation of the rank and file, through delegates from the local unions, shows very clearly, the genuine mass impulse behind the movement.

But if the domination of the conference by the Progressive Miners was the strength of the conference, then, in another sense of the word, it was also its weakness. The other delegations came from the small local craft unions and central bodies in the Illinois mining towns, and from Left wing groups which are still in the stage of propaganda rather than stable union organization. Such a combination can and should work out a common program of agitation. But on such a basis there can be no serious talk of a new labor federation.

The prospects of the new union represented at Gillespie are the prospects, first and foremost, of the Progressive Miners of America. If this new union survives the test of fire in the coming months, and consolidates its organization more firmly in the struggle against the operators and the UMWA, it will by that fact lay a big section of the foundations of the new unionism. If the PMA goes down in the light and loses its organizational base the new union movement will receive the heaviest blow.

In other articles the specific tasks and problems of the PMA, and its prospects for expansion into a wider field will be considered. In our opinion the Progressive Miners' movement in Illinois occupies at the present movement the key position in the unfolding of a new progressive sweep in the labor movement on a national scale. For that reason it deserves the closest attention of all those elements and tendencies which strive, or pretend to strive, in one way or another, to break the labor movement out of the paralyzing grip of the A. F. of L. bureaucrats. And by the same token the worth of these various tendencies in the field of trade unionism can be judged most concretely by their attitude toward the activities and problems of the PMA, and especially by the answers they give to the questions which haven't been answered yet.

From this point of view it is interesting to note the position taken on the Gillespie Conference by the various political groups. The Socialists, the CPLA, the Lovestonettes, the Stalinists and the Left Opposition—all of them reacted to the Gillespie Conference. But the only group that gave a clear and definite answer beforehand, and had its position confirmed to the letter by the experience of the conference itself, was the Communist Left Opposition.

That wing of the S. P. which trails along with the Progressive Miners, and fattens itself parasitically on the blunders and crimes of the leadership of the official Communist party, had nothing to say, and no advice to offer, about the project of a new federation of labor before the conference. As with the formation of the PMA itself, these parasites wait to see what luck the miners have with their ventures. If a given undertaking falls they wash their hands of it; if it succeeds and sweeps a mass movement with it, they trail along and exploit it. And all the time they maintain a solidarity within one party with the Hillquits who support Lewis and all the other black reactionaries.

The CPLA, which recommends itself as the center and leader of the progressive labor movement, also showed the quality of its leadership in the matter of the Gillespie Conference. The recent issue of the *Labor Age* printed the call for the Gillespie Conference, with its announced intention of "formulating a new federation of labor", without saying definitely what it thought about the project. Were the Mustettes in favor of the proposal? Or against it? Or neu-

tral?—you will look in vain for a categorical answer in their publication before the event. And it is on just such questions that clear and categorical answers are required. The comment of the *Labor Age* implies a certain support for the idea of a new federation of labor to be formed at the Gillespie Conference. But the door is left open to face the other way, if things go wrong and the miners involve themselves in a serious mistake. In this attitude the Mustettes ran true to form. In all their dabbling with the Illinois miners situation, they have never failed to show this policy of half-wayness by which they blunt the sharp edge of all the issues and muddle up the progressive movement from within. It is in the highest degree thanks to them that the Farrington-Howat betrayal was put over on the miners and the liberation movement against the Lewis bureaucracy was so long arrested and disoriented. Let the Illinois miners who retain some confidence in these pseudo-progressives, after all their experience, ask themselves why the CPLA did not take a clear position and warn them against premature and dangerous experiments with a new federation of labor. By what right can they claim to be leaders if they can't answer such questions, and answer them at the right time?

The Stalinist Position

The position of the Stalinist delegates in the Gillespie Conference was indeed a spectacle for gods and men. A half a dozen or so delegates from TUUL groups in Chicago came to the Gillespie Conference and gave the miners another occasion to scratch their heads in wonderment at this queer mélange of contradiction and inconsistency, this combination of adventurous leaps and panicky retreats, which goes by the name of the trade union policy of Stalinism. The conduct of the Stalinist delegates at the conference was indeed a humiliating confession of bankruptcy, and a complete repudiation of everything that have done on the trade union field in the disastrous years of the "third period".

If the trade union policy of a political group is any good it should reveal its strength precisely on such an occasion as the Gillespie Conference where workers' organizations are seeking an answer to new questions. Isn't that a fair test? The Left Opposition thought so, and that is why its representatives at the conference expounded their trade union policy, not in a new edition but in the old one. Nothing that we said or did there stood in contradiction to the standpoint we have taken in the whole course of the development of the progressive labor movement in recent years. We are quite willing for the militant miners to judge the trade union policy of the Left Opposition not only in the light of what we said at the conference but also in the light of what we said before the conference.

The Stalinists came to the conference under a heavy handicap. The best militants in the miners' organization were antagonistic to them, and for good reasons. The Stalinists fought the opposition movement in the UMWA which laid the ground for the formation of the P. M. A. They fought the PMA which represented a mass movement and set up against it the National Miners Union which did not exist in Illinois. They set the TUUL up as a new labor center in 1929 and since that time have been characterizing all unions that did not affiliate with it as "company unions". If these policies had been confirmed as correct by the development of the movement itself, the Gillespie Conference was just the place to defend them and to make further proposals along the same lines. But there was the rub. The policies had been completely discredited in life and did not in any way fit the problem of the hour.

How did the Stalinist delegates get out of this contradiction between the whole policy of the recent years and the

concrete needs of the moment? Very simply. They made a complete right-about-face on everything. And they did this without previous announcement or warning in the Party press, without any acknowledgment of previous error; and they even kept, or tried to keep, straight faces through this bizarre performance. In the conference there were not a few conscious militants who follow all developments closely and take careful note of what each group and tendency stands for. But even these seasoned people, who were glad enough to see the old ruinous policies discarded bag and baggage, regarded the spectacle with a certain amount of amusement and incredulity, as one watches a circus performer going through flip-flops and wonders how he does it.

If the party stands for the formation of a new labor movement, and if the TUUL is in fact the new labor center, as they have maintained since 1929, then why not urge the Gillespie Conference to join the TUUL? That is certainly a logical conclusion—if the policy was a correct one. But the Stalinist delegates did not even mention the TUUL. More than that, they appeared there as the most vociferous opponents of any idea of the formation of a new general labor movement at the present time. They repeated all the arguments which the Left Opposition has been making on this question, the arguments which up till yesterday had been denounced as counter-revolutionary. They went further than that. In their disorderly retreat from the discredited policy of yesterday, they arrived at such a conservative position, they argued so passionately against the danger of premature splits in the A. F. of L. unions, that they found themselves a number of times in alliance with the extreme Right wing of the conference, with those who wanted only to let well enough alone and take no further progressive steps of any kind.

If the National Miners Union is the only organization of the progressive miners, and if the PMA is only an imitation of the Lewis union—as was maintained up till yesterday—then the Gillespie conference should have been made a forum for the advancement of this idea. But this policy had likewise gone to pieces on the rocks of reality. So... the National Miners Union was not mentioned by a single word. It is by such contradictions and zig-zags that the Stalinists have succeeded in discrediting the Communist party in the Illinois coal field and facilitating the revival of the socialist organization.

The Left Oppositionists who, by a consistently correct policy over a period of years, and by a loyal participation in the struggles, have gained a certain influence and prestige in the progressive miners movement of Illinois, have great and unique tasks before them. They have to lift up the banner of Communism which has been trampled in the mire and make the miners understand that the monstrous blunders and crimes of the recent years are not an expression of Communism but of the Stalinist perversion of it. In view of the annihilation of the Party organization in southern Illinois, they are obliged to fulfill the natural functions of the party; to conduct the direct struggle against the reformist elements for the decisive influence in the movement. They have to take upon themselves directly the initiative and the leading role in the organization of a strong Left wing which will steer the new movement firmly on the path of a class struggle policy. The destiny of the Progressive Miners movement of Illinois depends on this. And, conversely, the chances of an early revival of the Communist movement and organization among the miners, under the direct leadership of the Left Opposition, depends upon the complete identity of its own interests with the fundamental interests of the miners' movement. The Left Oppositionists at the Gillespie conference were animated by this fundamental conception and made it the starting point of new plans and new endeavors. Great things can follow.

—JAMES P. CANNON.

Germany: Why Is the Comintern Silent

(Continued from page 1)

tomorrows. Significant fact: in 1931, the Communist party criminally supported the Fascist popular referendum to dissolve the Prussian Diet, with its socialist-Centrist government, thus alienating the socialist workers from Communism and raising the prestige and strength of Fascism. Our violent condemnation of the policy of the so-called Red Referendum was met with the customary Stalinist abuse: the Trotskyists are agents of Braun and Brüning. In 1933, the same Prussian Diet is finally dissolved by the Fascists, not by referendum but by dictatorial decree. What position do the Stalinists take? If their policy in 1931 was good Bolshevism, and not a criminal adventure, it would be logical that this policy be crowned in 1933 by a vote in the Diet to dissolve it. But they acted in exactly the opposite way: the Communist fraction voted together with the social democrats and the Catholic Center against the dissolution of the Diet!

Three: The most drastic decree yet issued has been put into effect by von Hindenburg on the control of the press and public meetings. Any public meetings, for which 48 hours advance notice must be given in any case, may be forbidden "when danger to the public security is to be apprehended". Are the Nazis a danger to the public security? Of course not! But the Communists and the socialists manifestly are, above all and primarily the former, against whom the decree is particularly aimed. Meetings and demonstrations may be dissolved for any one of a dozen reasons, which means they may be dissolved (i. e., violently dispersed) without any reason at all being given. Any paper may be confiscated or suppressed for "inviting disobedience of the government or its instruments, for inviting or glorifying violence, for proposing a general strike or a strike in some vitally necessary industry, for defending or holding up to contempt the organs or institutions or leading officials of the government," etc., etc. For second offenses, papers may be suspended for from six to twelve months! Even public collections for party purposes "may be restricted or forbidden". In a word, the activities by word or deed of any militant working class organization, of the Communist party in particular, are carefully circumscribed to the point where it is forced into a straitjacket.

As is known, the *Rote Fahne*, organ of the Communist party, together with several other party organs, has already been hit hard by suppression and confiscation. The central organ of the social democrats, *Vorwärts*, as well as other socialist papers, have met with a similar fate. The central headquarters of the Communist party in Berlin have already been raided. Meetings of workers are being forbidden or dispersed by force. The same measures employed by Mussolini on the road to establishing the black shirts in power, are being started with a vengeance by the Hitler bandits in Germany today.

The civil war has started in all earnest. We take some excerpts from a single issue of the New York Times (February 6, 1933):

"At midnight tonight reports from all over the country give this additional record—undoubtedly incomplete for the day—of the evil results of the violence attending these demonstrations. In Chemnitz, in a clash between socialists and Nazis, one socialist was killed and twelve wounded, five perhaps fatally. At Wetzlar twenty were wounded in a similar disturbance. At Bochum, in a conflict between Nazis and Communists, a Nazi leader was killed and there were thirty-one arrests. In Munich, in a Nazi-Communist clash, three Nazis, a Communist, two policemen and a Reichsbanner man were wounded. In Steinhilber, in a row between Nazi storm troops and socialist Reichsbanner men, a Nazi was badly wounded... Joachim Matthes, 17 years old, was held tonight in Mayserfurt on a charge of murdering Mayor Hermann Kasten. The Mayor, who was

Communists, Socialists and Fascists in Civil War

also a Socialist Deputy in the Prussian Diet and the father of a family, was shot from behind while opening his garden gate. He dies in a hospital... In Düsseldorf eight men were injured during clashes in various parts of the city, after four busloads of Nazis had been shot at from windows. Munich, Leipzig and Danzig also reported bloodshed..."

The civil war has started, but only started. The first bloody skirmishes already show what form it will take when it extends to the far vaster scale it must take on before the question: Fascism or Bolshevism, is definitely decided. The realities of the class struggle exploded the theories and pretises of the Stalinists every day. If the theory of "social Fascism" was regarded with contempt and outraged feelings by the Italian socialist worker who remembered his Matteotti, it is now being cut to pieces by the Hitlerite knives sunk into the bodies of socialist workers in Germany. The murder of Mayor Kasten, the killing of dozens of other socialist proletarians and militants, these give also a death-blow in concrete to the theoretically untenable slogan of "social-Fascism". What socialist worker, and what intelligent Communist worker will still believe that Kasten and other martyrs to Fascism in Germany were murdered because they represented the "moderate wing of Fascism"?

More than that: the consoling theory is being scoundrelously spread in whispers in the ranks of the Communist party that, after all, it makes no difference to the proletariat whether it be Brüning or von Papen or von Schleicher or Hitler who is in power. For, you see, they all represent one and the same class, the bourgeoisie! This is a theory of cowards, criminals or confirmed idiots. How many party members have been taken in by this, by your leave, theory, cannot be estimated. Scores of them, however, have voted it. We cannot conceive of a more signal service rendered to reaction than this theory. It is calculated to excuse the impotence of the Stalinists during the past period of the struggle, and also to justify the wretched passivity and bewilderedness of the party chieftains in face of the crisis.

Is Fascism Different?

Is Fascism "different" from the "democratic" forms of bourgeois government?

Is it possible that a serious worker can even entertain such a question in the year 1933? Yes, both are the rule of the bourgeoisie, one by "democratic" means, by deception, by illusions, by "peaceful persuasion". The other, however, throws off all pretense and tolerates none of the bourgeois or proletarian democratic forms or institutions. Is the suppression of the socialist press only a little accidental joke of Hitler? Is the murdering of several socialist workers merely a regrettable mistake of the Fascists, or perhaps a Machiavellian plot to disprove the Stalinist theory of "social Fascism"? Has the history of Italian Fascism been forgotten already? Have we already forgotten these gruesome photographs, printed in their time in every labor paper, of workers massacred in Italian streets, of newspaper offices wrecked, of labor temples demolished, of every single institution and organization of the working class—reformist or revolutionary—destroyed with bestial ferocity? Of the trade unions smashed and the political parties driven underground and their leaders imprisoned and exiled and banished?

Whoever even hints to the working class that there is no real difference between the "democratic" rule of the bourgeoisie and the Fascist rule by torch and sword, that it is a matter of indifference to the proletariat, is playing the same to the best interests of Fascism! Who ever does not shout out loud to the workers of all groups and organizations that they must immediately form a powerful united front to crush Fascism before it

is in a position to crush the working class completely, is not a leader of the working class but an impostor who should be kicked into the obscurity where he belongs.

Can Fascism still be smashed? Yes, it should and could have been smashed months ago, before Hitler became Chancellor. Invaluable, irreplaceable time has already been lost, but it is not yet too late. Once organized into a powerful, united army, the million-headed German proletariat can sweep the Fascist scum out of power and into oblivion. But this demands struggle, and united struggle, and whoever stands in the way is giving aid to Hitlerism.

The Socialist Leaders

Do the social democratic leaders want to fight? Yes, if they could be guaranteed that the masses, once set into real motion, will stop where the leaders want them to—i. e., at another socialist or coalition ministry, let us say—and not go further along the road to proletarian power—the logical goal of such a mass movement. But there is no such guarantee, and the socialist leaders, well aware of it, prefer to restrain, hold back, check, soothe and give false consolation to the masses who follow them. When the Diet is dissolved in Prussia, the social democracy does not call upon the workers to rise in protest, to act as a class. No, these contemptible Prussian democrats run to the Supreme Court at Leipzig to complain about Hindenburg's unconstitutional action!

But the Communists? You read the *Daily Worker* in vain for an elucidation of the strategy and tactics of the German Communist Party in the present situation. There are whole days when the *Daily Worker* simply doesn't mention the German situation, for what does it amount to when compared with a meeting of the Independent Barbers' Union of Greater New York? And when it does refer to Germany, it contains badly rewritten accounts from the capitalist press, or else cables from the International Press Correspondence which are a disgrace to the Communist movement? What is the line of policy of the German Communist? What are they doing? What do they plan to do? What has happened with the call issued on the morrow of Hitler's appointment for a national general strike? About all of these vital questions, not one single word in the columns of the *Daily Worker*.

Here you have the German situation poised on the tip of a needle. The way it falls will decide for the next period the fate of all Europe, and consequently of the world revolution. The central organ of the American Communist Party deals with the whole situation as though it were reporting a local strike of third-rate significance!

But let not the *Daily Worker* be made the scapegoat for the Comintern. For it is the Comintern, we repeat, that is responsible for the unprecedented silence concerning the German events. Why? Why is no explanation given to the Communist workers about this silence? What is the position of the responsible leadership of the Communist International on the decisive events which are unfolding in Germany? What horrible calamity is Stalinism preparing for the international proletariat?

Plain words! That is what we demand!

Speak up now! Not after the event, not as a sermon for the dead, but as a battle cry and a line of march for the living.

For the real, Leninist united front! For a bloc between the Communist party, the Social Democracy, the Trade Unions, the Red Front Fighters, and the Reichsbanner, to march separately but to strike unitedly, to bring the Iron fist of the German proletariat down upon the skull of the Fascist beast!

Proletarian Communists, militants, workers! The decisive word lies with you now. Speak up so that the whole movement may hear and act—before the whole movement has been drowned in its own blood.

Wed., Feb. 8.

—M. S.

Shall the Revolutionary Students Be Organized Into Separate Movements

(Continued from last issue)

DISCUSSION ARTICLE

If there is any instance where only the Communists can lead effectively and correctly, it is in the struggle against capitalist militarism and imperialist war. Yet, witness the spectacle at the Barbusse Congress at Amsterdam when the Communist International abandoned its rightful role of leadership to the intellectuals! Comment here is superfluous; the *Militant* has dealt fully with this Congress and at the Student Conference Against War at Chicago, initiated by the NSL and the Communists, the Amsterdam spectacle was repeated in an even more grotesque manner. The YCL abandoned its field and the results of the Chicago Conference were—confusion, disorganization, perversion and misrepresentation of the revolutionary war and means to combat imperialist war except as clarified by delegates and supporters of the Communist Left Opposition. (See the articles on the Chicago Student Conference in the *Militant* by Aderhabe and A. Glotzer for an analysis of this Conference). It was inevitable there, as at Amsterdam or wherever the same stunt is tried, that when the intellectuals or students took over the leadership in the anti-militarist movement, the real basis of struggle against war was vitiated and the workers misled. The C. P. and YCL stood in the wings, behind the scenes, witnessing, approvingly, the spectacle and abandoned their leading role. Was the revolution-

ary student participating in such a conference doing his duty in attempting to lead this struggle against capitalist war? He thought so. But he was doomed to failure. Yet subordinate to, and a part of, the YCL, the revolutionary students could take a part, however small or large, in a united front movement against war on specific issues.

On other questions, the NSL has taken a position which on the one hand is correct and on the other, false. For instance, the "revolutionary" NSL endorsed the Communist party in the November elections: a correct action. But it motivated its support of the C. P., not on revolutionary class grounds, but on the fact that the C. P., of all political parties consulted, had alone taken a stand for the students on their specific problems of class fees, etc. How ridiculous for an organization presumably pivoting on a revolutionary axis! Why should any such confusion arise among revolutionary students? It shouldn't; the confusion is unnecessary and springs largely from the concept of an independent student role and the belief that revolutionary students should put forth more "palatable" or "adaptable" reasons for their revolutionary conclusions. This is the manner in which liberals and opportunists justify their stupidities or betrayals.

Yet, and this is another decisive factor, the Young Communist League, measured by its theoretical and organizational basis, is or should be a sufficiently

broad organization to include within it not only young workers, but also the revolutionary-inclined students. The Communist Youth organization does not demand that young workers or students who desire to join it, shall be full-fledged Communists when they make application. It requires, and properly so, that those joining it shall be willing to learn to be Communists, in theory and through participation in the struggles of the workers. We speak here not of the caricature that the YCL in the United States, and elsewhere, has become, but of the foundation upon which the Young Communist International was erected and the manner the YCL were expected actually to function. For such students who join the NSL today because of its revolutionary program, we have to say that their place is directly in the ranks of the Communist youth organization.

It is a totally false conception of bridge organizations and their functions to accept the formation of an independent students' organization as a part of that schema. An ILD, which defends class war victims irrespective of their political or economic views, is one thing. An independent students' body with a political program and functions is an altogether different matter. An ILD has an obviously legitimate function to perform. An independent students' organization can, and already has done great harm to the immediate and historical interests of the workers. That which tends to and does usurp the role of a revolutionary political party or YCL becomes a perversion of Marxist theory on the role of a Communist party. When the Stalinists aid in the formation of such bodies as the National Student League, workers and

peasants parties, Labor party, anti-imperialist Leagues, etc., etc., they only further undermine the theoretical foundations of Marxism, and particularly the role of the C. P. and YCL. The NSL, in our opinion, is but another version or application of Stalinist theory, and as in the other cases it results only in additional blows delivered against the revolutionary movement. The Barbusse Conference and the American replicas of it are the demonstrations of how these blows are dealt.

But while the Left Opposition, hence, must stand opposed to the formation of independent students' organizations, and more so when they masquerade as "revolutionary" or "Communist", this by no means excludes work among the students. In whatever students' organizations exist, the Communist must build fractions, even as they do in trade unions and other mass organizations of the workers, and there seek to develop Communist influence and win the individual students to the revolutionary banner and organization. Even as anti-imperialist papers can be issued by the Communist without special anti-imperialist organizations, so can Communist student papers be issued to proclaim its cause for the workers and proletarian students.

Win Students on Communist Basis

Nor need there be any neglect of neutralizing or trying to win as allies to the proletarian cause the middle class or petty bourgeois students, in the same manner, relatively, as we seek to make allies of the poor and exploited farmers. But while we recognize the need to win such groups to accept the leadership of the proletariat and the Communists in the struggles against the bourgeoisie, yet

it is not for us to aid in the creation of organizations of the petty bourgeoisie of various descriptions. Bigger and more important tasks remain for the Communists. Wherever any organization exists, however, which contains workers and other elements upon whom we can exert influence, the Communists enter, build fractions and conduct their work accordingly. But certainly Communists can never think of relinquishing the role of leadership, politically or organizationally, to such elements; for they are historically unqualified to do so; they cannot serve with their confused and false programs, the interests of the working class and the vast mass of exploited. Trotsky points out in connection with the building of the Red Army: "The petty bourgeois intelligentsia could give the army a considerable number of lower officers, as they had done under czarism, but they could not create a commanding corps in their own image, for they had no image of their own." Likewise, by analogy, the Communists nowhere must concede leading historical roles to forces incapable of "creating a commanding corps." Wherever Stalinism has permitted them—and, worse, justified it—there have resulted debacles: in China on a tremendous world stage; in Amsterdam (Barbusse Congress) on a lesser, but still important scale; and in Chicago (Youth War Conference) on an illusory and comic scale.

In short, the Left Communists must come to the conclusion, in the writer's opinion, for the liquidation of the National Student League and similar creations, and insist that the Communist party and YCL take over the duties and role that properly belongs to them.

—MARTIN ABERN.