

The Columbus Conference

1. The Background of the Unemployed Movement

The Columbus Conference can be properly understood only in the light of all past experience of the unemployed movement. Four years of economic collapse have not rolled by without leaving their mark. As a matter of fact, it radically changed the whole physiognomy of the labor movement. Trade union organization, which never did reach any great proportions, diminished in size and unemployed organizations gradually grew up and developed.

At the beginning of the "depression", whatever organization of the unemployed was done resulted through the activity of the Communist party. The leadership of the socialist party was still groggy from an overdose of "prosperity" and the A. F. of L. bureaucracy was busy helping Hoover cover up the existence of the crisis. A truly golden opportunity here presented itself to the Communists of building up a mighty nation-wide unemployed movement such as might throw terror into the hearts of the bourgeoisie. Here also was the opportunity of cutting away the base of social reformism. But Stalinism is not rated for its accomplishments; defeats and set-backs are the rule that Stalinism works by, and the party's course during this entire period is certainly no exception to this rule.

Amidst such splendid possibilities, the party was weighed down with the Stalinist "third period" thesis, out of which flowed the ruinous theories and tactics that were guaranteed to bring about the isolation of the Communist party. Since the "third period" called for a "revolutionary upsurge" and this unfortunately did not exist—in fact does not yet exist in spite of the fact that the C. I. has for the second time recently declared with great solemnity that "capitalist stabilization has ended"—the revolutionary upsurge had to be manufactured. The "fight for the streets" was inaugurated and demonstrations of unemployed organized for that purpose. Somehow it did not occur to anyone to ask what the party would do with the streets after it had captured them—in the "third period" this would have been sheer heresy. Instead of organizing the unemployed around their immediate demands, the abstract slogan of "Work or Wages" was shouted to the four winds. The writer, who was active in organizing the unemployed in Milwaukee at that time and, together with others, began to lay some emphasis on the immediate needs of the unemployed instead of spending his time extolling the Chinese Soviets. Together with his associates he was hailed before a meeting of the District Committee and all were condemned as "Economists".

The party was out for "independent leadership". The party would have nothing to do with "social fascists". The party must "fight for the streets". The party must organize "revolutionary trade unions". This was surely the road to success—did not the party set into motion some million-and-a-half unemployed on the first March 6th? (See the Daily Worker) The height of this fever was reached when Browder thundered out a manifesto to the American working class to follow the example of the Arkansas farmers, storm warehouses, and help themselves.

But somehow no response came to this swashbuckling call to arms and it was not long before the same hand of Browder wrote another article in the same Daily Worker of a directly opposite nature and this without even a word of explanation. Whereas the first decree had instructed the workers to seize the food warehouses for themselves, the second article gave to understand that the real job of the Unemployed Councils was to make the American working class "soup-conscious", i. e., to begin concentrating on the immediate needs of the unemployed. Naive people scratched their heads in amazement and marvelled at this sudden change.

Unemployment Councils Decompose

The whole secret lay in the fact that in that period the Unemployed Councils, which had at first experienced a relatively rapid growth, had now begun to decompose at an equally rapid pace, precisely because they could not be kept together on the basis of abstract slogans. In fact, the demonstrations, which had been the stimulant administered to keep them alive, had begun very seriously to decline in size and generally to fizzle out. Hence the slogan.

Meanwhile the Unemployed Councils were the only organizations in the field. The S. P. was still blissfully oblivious to its own possibilities and had not reached where spontaneous organizations would come into existence. But the inability of the party to adapt itself to the needs of the moment, as well as the deepening of the crisis, at length began to make their way into the consciousness of the American reformists. The failure of the Communists served to encourage the S. P. and it began to organize its own unemployed movement. The Muste group, not to be outdone, began to organize its unemployed organizations. Still another stratum of unemployed organizations came into existence, organized on a self-help or barter basis, of which the original California carrot-pulling organization is typical.

But as the crisis deepened, even these self-help organizations began

to change their complexion and inevitably gravitated in the direction of class struggle.

By this time, the Unemployed Councils had drawn up several social insurance bills, the first one demanding twenty-five dollars a week for the unemployed, and the others gradually going lower and lower. Hunger marches on Washington and state capitals were organized which at first, as long as they served to dramatize certain campaigns, aroused the country to the brutality of the crisis, but later began to peter out, due to senseless repetition. To obtain the actual numerical strength of the Unemployed Councils over this period is impossible. The Daily Worker is not famous for modesty and truthfulness.

Need of Unity

Gradually these various organizations developed and grew up side by side and a leveling process set in. The most radical, i. e., the Unemployed Councils, got out of the dizzy heights of the "Third Period" and began to pay some attention to the needs of the unemployed. In fact, the center of their entire activity became the fight for relief. On the other hand, the self-help organizations were driven to the wall and had to resort to the same activities as were conducted by the Unemployed Councils; that is, eviction activity, turning off gas and electricity, etc. So that, at the beginning of this year, aside from the spontaneous organizations, practically every political group had its own unemployed organization, each carrying on practically the same activity and having practically the same program. And gradually the thought of unity began to develop—the thought of uniting all unemployed organizations into one.

Another golden opportunity here presented itself to the Communist party—and another golden opportunity was missed. At this point, "the united front from below" hung like a millstone around the neck of the party, with the bureaucrats keeping vigilant guard lest anyone should seek to loosen it. When the thought of unity took on concrete form, it was not the Stalinist leadership that concretized it but on the contrary the reformist, Karl Borders, of the Chicago S. P. who had built up a large unemployed movement of considerable influence. It was this Workers' Committee, together with the Workers' League, that met last fall and began to talk in concrete terms of federation. Of course, Karl Borders had an axe to grind. A federation of unemployed organizations which would exclude the Unemployed Councils would be quite acceptable to Mr. Borders. In a federation of this sort, the S. P. could easily take the leadership and thereby capture the control of additional unemployed organizations. As for the Workers' League—well, that is a small organization which could be easily disposed of. So thought Mr. Borders. But, as the canny Scot would have it, "There is many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip". And, in this case, the cup was rudely dashed out of Borders' hands.

The Chicago Conference

The call for the Chicago Conference of Unemployed Organizations was very plain-spoken. The conference was to achieve unity, but the Unemployed Councils were to be left out. No organized voice of protest was heard from the rank and file of Borders' organization against this perfidious arrangement. What made it possible for Borders to proceed in this manner with impunity was the past activity of the Unemployed Councils along the lines of "united front from below" previously commented upon in the Militant.

As the day of the conference approached, the Chicago Branch of the Left Opposition addressed a letter to the C. P. asking for a Left wing bloc to fight for a militant policy in the conference. This only group that came into this conference with a clear-cut program of unity through federation was the Left Opposition and before the conference adjourned our position was adopted in the main.

From the point of view of numerical attendance, the conference was no great success. But it was thoroughly representative, and in that lay its importance. Literally, all shades of political thought were represented through the medium of the delegates from the various unemployed organizations which they had built up. It was, however, very uncertain at the beginning as to which political current would predominate.

Left Wing Scores Victory

The first battle of this conference was around the question of seating the Unemployed Council delegates. After a heated debate, a vote was taken and the Left wing scored its first victory, which indicated the general possibilities. From then on, the conference began slowly but surely to slip from the hands of Mr. Borders, and the Left wing position grew stronger and stronger. The Stalinists, who had come uncertain even of being seated, became arrogant and attempted to hog the entire conference. Only through the utmost exertion of the Left Opposition were the differences between the various Left wing groups bridged and unanimity established on the salient points of policy.

The Left wing emerged victorious from this conference. Out of this conference grew the National

Lessons of the Leninist United Front Tactic

(Continued from last issue)

ANOTHER SO-CALLED UNITED FRONT

In the hey-day of the "united front from below" the Stalinist called many united front conferences, sending calls to all organizations under their ideological and mechanical control and asking all other workers to break with their leadership and join the "united front". The T. U. U. L. and the I. L. D., the W. I. R. and the fraternal organizations, as well as any A. F. L. local where the Left wing was strong enough to send a delegate, received a call.

The delegates at the conference, no matter how many paper organizations or real organizations they represented, represented one political current: Stalinism—with the exception of the Left Opposition which was always kicked out the door, and several stray delegates who ran the gauntlet by accident. Month in and month out the same organizations sent delegates to the "united fronts". Each time the conference ended with the Stalinists capturing themselves, through the "united front from below".

The united front is a tactic of uniting, in temporary agreement, different organizations, and different political tendencies. To call together several organizations under socialist party control is not a united front, any more than the calling together of those organizations under Stalinist control constitutes a united front. United front action must be between organizations, but at the same time must embrace more than one political current. Each political current entering the united front is expected to rally those organizations and forces it has control over.

The Mooney Congress held in

(Chicago in May, with about two dozen political tendencies; and the Unemployment Conference held in Chicago in June, with fifteen political tendencies—were first steps toward the Leninist United Front action. However, the number of workers put in motion and not the number of political tendencies is decisive.

THE UNITED FRONT AS A MANEUVER

The reformists say that the communists are insincere and that the call for a united front is a maneuver. If it is so then the reformists have nothing to worry about because if the Communists call a united front upon such a flimsy foundation, the Communists and not the reformists will lose. Of course the united front tactic or rather, the rejection of the united front tactic by Stalinism has played into the hands of the reformists, but in the main this is merely an excuse of the reformists to avoid taking part in the united front.

On the other hand, one must not take the word maneuver in too narrow a sense. If by maneuver one means a trick that we are opposed to a maneuver, but the fact remains that every move of any military or political force is a maneuver. In this latter sense, every united front action, like all other political actions, is a maneuver. The thing for the revolutionist and honest worker to find out is: Is it a correct maneuver, one that benefits the working class—or a false maneuver?

NON-AGGRESSION PACTS

The reformists and opportunists and misleaders will prevent a united front as long as possible, but once more the mass pressure and conditions force them to make a move toward the united front they

immediately attempt to set up certain provisions which will guarantee them from the "evils of exposure". One of their favorite means is to attempt to form a "non-aggression" pact with the others participating in the united front. They demand that while the united front is conducted, the organizations should refrain from criticizing each other. If one agrees to refrain from political criticism, then the misleaders are sure they will not be exposed in action for their traitorous acts. Anyone who agrees to refrain from criticism during united front action forsakes one of the basic conditions of the Leninist united front. The right of minority expression and political criticism must be guaranteed at all times. Only fakery would ask for such a pact and only fools and Stalinists would agree to such pacts. Stalinism, like the social democracy, has its own crimes to cover up.

In the last several years in Germany, while Fascism was marching forward with rapid strides, while Stalinism was in its "third period", the social democratic betrayers were rendered the greatest historical service possible by the Stalinist united front from below. When over the threshold of state power Fascism gained, and was already the social democratic leaders offer the Communists a united front, but with the "non-aggression" clause, the C. I. statement and answer agreed to refrain from criticism. Again, following the "united front from below", the agreement to refrain from criticism rendered social democracy more service. This was repeated at the Mooney Congress in Chicago by the Stalinists.

(To be continued)

Ohio State Jobless Confab

Flag Waving Patriots - Muste's Supporters

OHIO CONVENTION EXPOSES REACTION IN MUSTE BUILT LEAGUES

Columbus, Ohio.—We were received at the Columbus Convention on July 1st by a "workers" patrol, marked with arm-bands, armed with clubs and headed by one "Joe Gersbner", whom Truax, president of the Ohio Unemployed League, saw fit to publicly characterize on July 1st by the national convention as a "stool-pigeon, organizer of strike-breakers and company thugs". It was not until the third day of the convention, after incoming fraternal and out-of-town delegates had protested vigorously against these armed "guards" that the clubs disappeared; and with the exception of a few passing words about a "disguised national guard" not one public word was said in protest, until the last day of the convention, and then only to the Ohio Caucus.

The first session began with the endorsement of slates presented by the state office, etc., and continued with reports from county delegations to local conditions. Karl Pauli, S. P. member spoke on the Continental Congress. Truapp spoke on the C. P. sponsored Small Home and Land Owners Federation. Arnold Johnson spoke as representative of the C. P. L. A. and organizer of the O. U. L., mentioning united front action with Unemployed Councils through state federation. Clowe, chairman of the Franklin County League, in which Columbus is situated, jumps to platform and demands to know whether or not the Councils respect the "Star and Stripes". Preis of Toledo follows, attempting to defend the councils and explain the working class attitude towards "the flag". He is interrupted by a threatening riot, cries of "Stop him!", "Call the police", "Make him take that back!" and a charge on the platform of about one-fourth those present. Numerous members of this "workers guard" took part in this demonstration. Fortunately there was a fence between the audience and the platform, which stemmed the rush long enough to let the Mustelites Johnson and Baubot smooth the situation over with words.

But the situation was still tense enough when Perkins of Franklin County, introduced the motion: That the following be inserted in the Preamble of the O. U. L.—"The Stars and Stripes forever. When they're right we'll uphold them; when they're wrong we'll fight them". That no one dared to object to. This was passed before Ben Smith of Franklin County, urged the crowd to return to their seats saying that the O. U. L. was not organized "under the red flag but as a 100 percent American organization", and pacified them with words about "diplomacy".

With such a start it was hard to expect much from this convention. And it is significant that the leaders of this non-class-conscious gang (to be mild) came mostly from Franklin County, in which the Columbus office of the O. U. L. is located and where we should normally expect the most progressive elements to be. If the Mustelites of the O. U. L. had really followed a working class organizational and educational policy.

—N.

Declaration of L. O. at Columbus Conference

TO ALL DELEGATES TO THE NATIONAL UNEMPLOYMENT CONFERENCE

Brother delegates:

The passing of the Industrial Recovery Act by the Roosevelt government is the most far-reaching attack on the working class. This Act is a direct attack against the unemployed.

Capitalist charity and unemployment "emergency relief" has proven inadequate and has come to a breakdown. The capitalists realize that they will have to spend hundreds of millions of dollars next winter in order to keep the 18 million unemployed in submission. Hence the Recovery Act.

This Recovery law is an attempt on the part of the capitalists to side-step social insurance. They have passed codes in various industries precisely for the purpose of establishing a universal stagger system in order to absorb some of the unemployed into industry at a starvation wage. The 3 billion dollar program of public and manufacturers. Workers hired for this public works program will be paid in inflated currency, which will not suffice for the barest necessities of life. This is merely another form of forced labor which the capitalists will institute in the place of social insurance.

The Industrial Control Law establishes a form of state capitalism and is calculated to save the rotten and decayed capitalist structure by the elimination of small producers, the organization of cartels, the outlawing of strikes, the establishing of a class collaboration machinery to hamper the development of class struggle organizations and the shifting of the entire burden of the crisis upon the working class. By instituting these measures and reducing the cost of production, the American capitalists hope to be in a position where they will be able to better compete on the world market.

A determined struggle must be waged by the entire working class

against the effects of this capitalist offensive in the form of the Recovery Act. The unemployed have a special part in this struggle. Fellow delegates:

The present economic crisis is here to stay. It is a natural development of capitalism. Increasing unemployment and lower relative wages, greater misery and increased pauperization are all natural products of the present decaying system. The capitalists have no solution for the present crisis. Their present scheme of the partnership of industry and government will no more solve the problem than their previous plans. The only real and permanent solution to all the misery created by this planless system of production is the proletarian revolution. For the working class to rid itself for all time of the present conditions it is necessary to uproot capitalism and replace it by a socialist planned system of production for use.

Toward the achievement of this goal it is necessary first of all to put the working class in motion in a struggle for its immediate needs. This conference must adopt a program of action for the struggle for these immediate demands. In addition to local demands, the Communist League of America (Left Opposition) proposes to the conference the consideration and adoption of the following concrete slogans and organizational steps:

1. For immediate relief and social insurance at the expense of the bosses and their government.
2. For the 6-hour day, 5-day week with an increase in wages.
3. Fight for higher wages and increased relief to combat inflation.
4. For the recognition of and the extension of long-term credits to the Soviet Union.

To attain the necessary strength to struggle for these demands we propose the following organizational steps:

1. The application of the united front tactic as a means of uniting the various unemployed organizations (Unemployed Leagues, Unemployed Councils, Workers' Leagues, etc., etc.) should be put into effect. In this united front each organization retains its organizational independence, refrains from slander and personal attack against each other, but maintains the right of minority expression and freedom of criticism. Under no circumstance can any united front exclude or bar any unemployed organization from participation. Should the leadership of any unemployed organization attempt to prevent the entry of its organization into the united front, continued efforts must be made to bring them into the united front.
2. The Columbus Conference is the second national conference held this year. The Chicago Conference of June 13-15, called by the Workers' Committee on Unemployed and the Workers' League, has established a National Unemployed Federation of Workers' Leagues, to which are already affiliated the largest unemployed organizations in the country. This Federation stands for the unification of the unemployed movement and is opposed to any discrimination against race, color, creed or political opinion.
3. Of all the organizations that participated in the conference, endorsed the program and voted for the Federation—such organizations as the Unemployed Leagues, Workers' Committee, Workers' League, and Unemployed Councils—only the Borders leadership of the Workers' Committee has tried to split the Federation.
4. The most important task of the Columbus Conference is unification with the National Unemployed Federation.
5. This Conference must go on record favoring affiliation to the National Federation. This will be the greatest step in the direction of establishing unity in the unemployed movement on a national scale.
6. Our objective should be the amalgamation of all the unemployed organizations into one. This can be accomplished only after the various unemployed groups learn how to work together in a united front or federation which at first gives each participating organization organizational autonomy. This course must be followed because amalgamation is a far more advanced step than affiliation to the National Unemployment Federation.
7. Finally, efforts must be directed towards the unification of the struggle of the unemployed workers with that of the employed and in cooperation with all working class organizations.

July 3rd, 1933.

UNEMPLOYED ORGANIZATION FRACTION, COMMUNIST LEAGUE OF AMERICA (LEFT OPPOSITION)

OPEN AIR MEETINGS FOR NEW YORK

Manhattan: 7th St. and 2nd Ave. every Thursday night 6 P. M., 80th Street and Lexington Ave., every Friday night 6 P. M., Harlem: 125th St., and 5th Avenue, every Saturday night 8 P. M., Bronx: 163rd Street and Prospect Ave., every Sat. night 8 P. M., Brooklyn: Pitkin Ave. and Bristol St. (Brownsville) Friday night

Hathaway Speaks on United Front in Brownsville

New York, N. Y.—C. A. Hathaway, editor of the Daily Worker, gave another of his famous lectures in Brownsville a week ago. This time the subject was to be the National Industrial Recovery Act. The lecturer was going along at a fine pace for about one hour when suddenly he found himself in the dreadful united front business once more. And here this great apostle of Stalinism could not restrain himself from casting a few slanders at the Left Opposition, and comrade Trotsky. He told the workers that the renegade Trotsky wanted only a united front from above, and that the "Trotskyists" told the workers that they must not attack the leaders of the socialist party. It appears that the Hathaways will stoop to any level in order to fool the workers into believing that Trotsky is a counter-revolutionary. What a shameless lie!

When and where has the Left Opposition ever said that we must unite only from above?—and that we must not attack the leaders? "The Trotskyists want us to go to the doors of Hillquit and Thomas and knock, and in this manner they will form a united front."

At a District membership meeting of the Y. C. L. where he attempted to clarify the party united front policy, it was this same Hathaway who got up and in a mass of dramatic gestures boasted so loudly of the fact that "yesterday comrade Stachel, and myself went to visit A. J. Muste and we got him to accept our united front invitation." And did comrade Hathaway forget? "We called up Norman Thomas and he agreed to bring up our invitation to the National Committee of the Socialist Party."

Then there was still the question (and a new policy in the Hathaway lectures) discussion period. And lo and behold the same incident to even a greater extent than at the District membership meeting of the Y. C. L. The questions were all of a "Trotskyite" nature, causing comrade Hathaway to get very angry as he remarked, picking up the large bundle of questions, "I think

Stalinist Slugger Beats Left Oppositionist

Brooklyn, N. Y.—Continuing a policy of using their fists when their heads ceased to supply arguments, leading Y. C. L. members resort to the method of physical violence against Left Oppositionists.

On Friday night, July 14, after an open-air meeting held by the Left Opposition in Brownsville had ended and the comrades had left, comrade Joe Elliott was attacked in front of the Parkway cafeteria. The Stalinists previously made attempts to provoke him. Al Dasch, functionary of the Brownsville section, notorious as a retired pugilist, "hard guy", and Trotsky-baiter, shouted out: "These Trotskyists must be driven out of Brownsville!"

Comrade Elliott replied: "I'll leave when the workers of Brownsville want me to leave," and turned away. Al Dasch swung viciously at Elliott and dealt him several blows, injuring his eye.

Many of the workers present protested against this procedure and loudly voiced their opinions, promising to bring this matter up at the Section headquarters. To some of the others this "educational" work of Dasch, who is a member of the Section "Agit-prop" was considered in line with the "New Turn" though not outlined in the famous Open Letter.

Several Y. C. L. members expressed their indignation by saying that they would go themselves to the Section and bring charges against Dasch. In the meantime the Section has not uttered a word on the matter; by its very silence it is condoning and encouraging gangsterism and strong-arm methods. The system of Stalinism promises advancement and functionaries' positions by plenty of use of the fist and nothing of the head.

—J. S.

CHICAGO BEACH PARTY

At Roscoe and the Lake

SUNDAY, JULY 23, 1933, 2 P. M.

(Meet at home of Esther O'P, 631 W. Roscoe Ave.)

—Refreshments Singing, Games—

Come Early and Enjoy Festivities

Auspices: Spartacus Youth Club

All comrades sending in news accounts and articles for publication in the Militant are requested to prepared typed copy, triple spaced.

(To be continued)

Quantity Becomes Quality

From the very start, the Stalinists frowned on the Federation. In spite of the fact that the Unemployed Councils were members of this Federation, they did not bestir themselves greatly to bring in other organizations. To withdraw from the Federation would have meant to step openly in the footsteps of Borders and thus lose prestige, so they decided to stay in the Federation and kill it from within. But how? Here, the great incubator of ideas, Earl Browder, finally stumbled upon a very likely scheme. He suddenly remembered that Muste had also called for a unity conference in Columbus. So negotiations were started with the "Left social Fascist" Muste. And why not? Is Muste any worse than Cook, Hicks, and Purcell? If he is, then he certainly cannot be worse than Chiang Kai-Shek, whom Browder knew in the past rather too intimately.

And so it came to pass that on a fine day in June, Browder came to Chicago and suffered himself to appear before the national committee of the Federation. Said the omniscient one to the national committee: "Frankly, we are not satisfied with the Federation. Here we are, the biggest unemployed organ-