

The Railroad Brotherhoods
The Rise and Fall of the Craft Unions

In our first article we touched briefly upon the origin of the railroad unions and their failure to adjust their structure and program in conformity with industrial developments on the railroads. In this article we will say something on the rise and fall of the Craft Union. It is quite natural that when we first conceive of anything we do so on its narrowest base, and our understanding and outlook on any question broadens with experience. In harmony with this law of development it was, therefore, quite natural that the locomotive engineer who first conceived of organizing in 1823, should do so on a very narrow base or on the basis of his own craft alone. It did not occur to him to take the firemen, whom he often hired and fired, in with him. The conductor felt the same about his brakeman. Often the fireman had to reward the engineer, the brakeman and the conductor for the privilege of working with them. The problems which confronted those early pioneers in organization work were small and simple when compared with the workers' problems of today. The railroads, as well as industry in general, were in a state of growth and expansion and needed more and more workers, and the organized craft was usually able to bargain with the small companies. We think it can be truthfully said that the craft union functioned fairly well in the interest of its members until about the beginning of the present century, when the gradually growing problems of the railroad workers ushered in the idea of Craft Federation. The so-called "Big Four" would join hands in concerted wage movements, the Federated Shop Crafts would do likewise. The Eight Hour Day victory in 1916 was about the last successful stand of the craft union

A Statement to the Communist Party

To the D. E. C. of the C. P. To the D. E. C. of the Y. C. L. COMRADES:

For some time now, the undersigned comrades, members of the Communist Party or the Young Communist League, have been considering with growing alarm the development of the position of our movement in connection with recent events in this country and in Europe. We have in mind especially what happened in Germany before and after the seizure of power by Hitler, and the significance of the agreement signed at Washington between the representatives of the Soviet Union and the United States. You are undoubtedly aware that a great deal of confusion and uncertainty, doubts and dissatisfaction exists in the ranks of our Party and League on these questions. The aim of this letter is to arrive as speedily as possible at a clarification. The German events were a distinct shock to us—this we cannot conceal. We were persuaded by the policy and the propaganda of the Communist International and our party here, that our brother party in Germany was making steady progress in driving back the Fascist gangs and winning over increasing sections of the social democracy. But the outcome of the historic struggle in Germany proved to be exactly contrary to all the forecasts that were made by our leadership. It has now become clear to us that what happened in Germany requires—demands—on our part a thorough examination into the situation and the policy that was followed by us, and a drastic revision of our present course. Instead of a successful advance of our party in Germany, it has been defeated, and now lies crushed by the Brown-shirted monsters. Instead of the victory of the Red Front, we had the victory of the Swastika.

One other event has confirmed us in our criticism of the course of the Comintern. That is the Litvinoff-Roosevelt negotiations. We know of course that in dealing with capitalist governments, the Soviet Union is obliged to "give and take", to make concessions where necessary. But there are concessions and concessions. As Communists, we cannot and must not surrender anything in principle to the capitalist enemy. And that is what, in our opinion, was done at Washington by the representative of the Soviet Union. We refer here to Paragraph Four of the Litvinoff letter to Roosevelt. In the minds of every worker, and in the minds of the bourgeoisie itself, this paragraph pledges the Soviet Union to prohibit the existence of the International Communist movement on its territory. It is pledged to prevent the residence on its soil of any organization whose aim is the overthrow of the existing social order in the United States. The only organization to which this refers—or can refer—is the Communist International and its American section (our Party) whose historic aim is the replacement of the present capitalist system in this country by the rule of the working class. Not only we, the undersigned, but hundreds of other Party and League members were deeply affected by this pledge of Litvinoff. Even the newest members of our movement are uneasy and uncomfortable in the face of what happened. We have our own opinions on this question. We consider it our duty to present them to the membership. We also consider it your duty to present to us and to the membership the official standpoint of our party leadership. It is only by discussing these questions openly in the party and the League, democratically and freely, that the greatest good can result for our movement.

Montreal Stalinists Answer Marxist Ideas with Hooliganism

Montreal.—The last few weeks in Montreal have been rich in striking demonstrations of the lengths to which the Stalinists are driven in frantic effort to suppress the ideas of the Left Opposition. The organized rowdy attempt to disrupt our meeting a few weeks ago, the removing of posters advertising our meetings, the picket-lines before our doors, the ejection of our delegates from the Anti-Fascist Conference now shriveled to the dimensions of a Stalinist caucus—all these things points unmistakably to a hooliganism become rampant at the promptings of fear. The workers provoked to thought as a result of these scandalous methods will realize that the question of working-class democracy cannot be relegated to the sphere of mere etiquette. Political bankruptcy breeds inevitably the methods of hooliganism. Gangsterism has long been the weapon of the reformist fakir, the trade union bureaucrat, against the Left Wing. The Stalinists, unable to withstand a Marxist criticism, are introducing the same bag of tricks into the Left Wing. Comrades alarmed by this foul stench reaching their nostrils will ponder and search until they unearth the cesspool of political in-solvency from which it emerges. A Stalinist Lecture on Germany On December 3, S. Sarkin, a local mandarin of the general line lectured at the Jewish Cultural Centre on the tactics of the C. P. in Germany. With the contents of the lecture itself we will not concern ourselves here—a loud-mouthed brushing of the latest wisdom of Platinitsky, shrill with contradictions, based on the stupendous check of the speaker and on his speculation on the ignorance of the audience. A sample or two will suffice—"The tactic of the United Front was abandoned after 1922 (the year of the Fourth Congress!) because the Social-Democracy became openly counter-revolutionary" (!). "The defeat of 1933 was to be traced to the error made in 1920, immediately corrected and never again repeated, in withdrawing from the reformist trade unions. "The 13 years of systematic work within the trade unions climaxed with growth of the R. G. O. (1) to a strength (?) of 310,000 in 1933."

International Notes

GERMANY. The Socialist Workers Party (S. A. P.) and the International Communists (Left Opposition) are continuing their close collaboration in the creation of the German section of the new International. They have just issued a joint draft of directives for the trade union work of the new Communist party in Germany. Extracts of this document, which is of exceptional interest, will be published in future issues.

'Historical Analogies'

(Trotsky and Dan—Workers Age—December 1, 1933.) The bureau of historical falsification under the leadership of Lovestone (Gra. 5-8903) has manufactured another "striking document". But we suspect that this time the job has been entrusted to an amateur. That this is amateur's handiwork is evidenced first by the fact that only three pages (and consecutive pages at that) have been put through the Lovestone hopper for synthetic quotations (patent applied for by Stalin) in order to produce a quotation to match the "fundamental similarity" with two sentences written by Dan. An expert Lovestone "quoter" usually concocts a quotation out of a volume—of at least, 20 pages. In the second place, of the sentences which had been torn out of context and indirectly manipulated—only one has been directly distorted. Trotsky is quoted as follows: "The ruling apparatus enjoys a great relative independence." Here is what Trotsky really wrote, "Without having that absolute independence, the illusion of which lives in the skulls of many bureaucrats, the ruling apparatus nevertheless enjoys a great relative independence." Only one direct distortion—that is almost a record! But while amateurish in execution, this performance attains the lowest levels hitherto achieved by the past masters of slander and distortion.

On top of all this, we were astonished to see that our party, with its hundreds of thousands of members, and millions of supporters in the elections, failed to strike a single blow at the Fascists in order to prevent them from coming to power. Our party proved, to our great regret, to be incapable of mobilizing any substantial section of the working class for the purpose of organizing their resistance to the advance of Hitlerism. To us this was evidence of a serious, fundamental weakness in our party and its policy, both of which are tested precisely in such moments as the crucial hour in Germany. It is not that we are discouraged by a defeat, for we know that the proletarian movement will rise again regardless of temporary setbacks. Far from it. We remain today just as confident of our final victory on a world scale as we have always been. But the way to overcome a defeat is to analyze its causes and take the necessary steps to eliminate them or correct them. Far from doing this, our party and manner. The fact of the defeat has not even been acknowledged. No attempt has been made by the International or any of its sections to examine into the policy of the past to find out what was wrong. No attempt has been made to correct what we see now quite plainly to have been our radically false policy on "Social Fascism", or the "United Front Only from Below", or our incorrect analysis of Fascism itself. Everything that was done in the past, and the leadership which did it, has been approved without reservations. Consequently, instead of laying the basis for overcoming the defeat and rising again to victory, the basis still remains for the addition of new setbacks for our movement not only in Germany but throughout the rest of the world.

It is for this reason that we take this occasion to propose to you to call a joint city-wide membership meeting of the Party and the League for the purpose of hearing a report on the questions involved and of giving the membership an opportunity to express itself on them. Such a meeting is a most urgent need of the hour. We expect to present our views there in full. Such a meeting is all the more necessary at this moment because, as you know, there are many burning problems confronting our movement. Both the Party and the League are suffering from radical defects in their policy and their work. In the field of the unemployed, in the trade union field, and in many others—as has been pointed out by the Open Letter of the Central Committee—our work is in extremely bad condition. The way to correct it is to make possible (1) a democratic discussion; (2) a fundamental examination into party policy; (3) a thorough revision of it. We hope that this communication will meet with speedy and favorable action on your part, and that you will consider it motivated by a devoted interest in the welfare and progress of the revolutionary movement. With Communist greetings, (Signed) AL DASCHI, Unit 6, Section 8, Brownsville Section Committee, Brownsville Communist Party, ISIDORE LIPSCITZ, Unit 3, Young Communist League, (Brownsville), DAVID LEESER, Unit 11, Section 11, Brighton, Communist P.

Bedlam at the Meeting Goretzky of the Left Opposition when finally allowed the floor began a quotation from *Unser Kampf* which Sarkin had challenged us to produce. Sarkin attempted to tear the paper from his hand, crying that we wanted the original (nothing less). This was the signal for the breaking loss of bedlam. Comrade Krehm, while asking the chairman for the floor, was struck twice in the teeth. Our comrade was jostled off the platform and the meeting hurriedly closed. The Stalinist faithfuls had been worked up to a virtual pogrom spirit by demagogues Sarkin and it was only due to the intervention of some of the more hot-headed comrades present that the violence was not greater than was actually the case. After the close of the meeting comrade Krehm challenged Sarkin to debate the topic of the lecture, branding him as yellow in the event of a refusal. The same challenge has been repeated publicly in the columns of the local Jewish paper. Whether the Stalinists, after the defeat administered to them at our last German lecture several weeks ago, will respond remains to be seen. Already within the Stalinist ranks protest is making itself heard against the hooliganism of the Stalinists toward the Left Opposition. Every honest element must join in banishing these shameful methods, the product of panic and despair, from the ranks of the working-class movement.

Short Dispatches from Fascist Germany

The Panter Affair. The affair of the British journalist, Panter, accused of espionage (as is well known he had communicated to the British press about a Nazi demonstration in Kelheim reporting military details) and incarcerated in Munich for ten days ended ignominiously for Germany after he was ordered deported. It is not so well known that he got the details regarding the armed strength of the S. A., etc., from a journalist employee by Hugenberg's TEL-UNION, a certain Ackermann. The latter has likewise been arrested. Possibly the Hugenberg circles intended to spoil the good relations between England and the Third Reich.

Index of Standard of Living March and April, 1933—73.4, May—80.5, June and July—80.9, August—80.7. The nourishment index alone rose from 70.7 in March to 73.7 in June, declining in August to 73.4. The small decline in the last month as explained by seasonal fluctuation since the price for potatoes has every reason to send telegram of gratitude to Hitler.

MINNEAPOLIS NEW YEAR'S EVE AFFAIR Bridge—Dancing Entertainment—Refreshments—Sunday, December 31, 1933, 9 P. M. at 3001 Elliott Avenue Auspices: Minneapolis branch C. L. of A. (Opp.) Everybody Welcome.... Adm. Free

CHICAGO INTERNATIONAL LABOR FORUM 2557 W. North Avenue Every Sunday 3 P. M. Dec. 24.—Religion and Social Progress. GEORGE KATSIOLIS Communist orator of note. Dec. 31.—Workingclass Internationalism and Decisive Crises. (An analysis of the causes leading to the downfall of the 3 workers International.) JOSEPH GIGANTI of Chicago Left Opposition

A. F. of L. and Mirror Workers

New York.—The Novelty Mirror Workers Union has again been defeated in its aims to constitute itself as a genuine trade union for the safeguarding of the economic interests of all the workers in the trade. This time the aims of the workers were deflated by the A. F. of L. bureaucrats of the International Pocketbook Workers Union, whose desire for fat per capita fees and whose genuine fear of any sign of militancy from the workers, cannot be questioned. It will be remembered that the union, shortly after its formation, fell under the blundering leadership of the T. U. U. L. After an unfortunate strike—unfortunate in the sense that it was led by the Stalinists—that dissipated the energies of the workers, and almost robbed them of all confidence in trade unionism, it became comparatively easy to convince a majority of the workers that the loss of the strike was not due to a couple of "skunks" but chiefly due to the syndicalist, ultra-Left policies of the Nessin leadership which laid obstacles in the path of the strike and made a number of workers lose hope too soon, causing them to go back to work before the strike was ended. Apply for A. F. of L. Charter Consequently, of a membership meeting—of 50 workers (out of an original 300)—sometime later called together for the purpose of discussing the question of affiliation, a majority of workers voted to apply for a charter from the A. F. of L. The remainder, still poisoned by Stalinist influence, walked out of the hall, completely disrupting the meeting, and causing a serious split. Immediately, a committee was elected—of which a member of the Communist League was one—to start negotiations with the International Pocketbook Workers Union. The committee, at first, went to see Hugh Fraire, head of the local office of the A. F. of L., who proceeded to an endless questioning and demanding statements and finally came to the point—who is to have jurisdiction over the union? The A. F. of L. faked, very jealous of his jurisdictional rights, decided that the International Pocketbook bureaucrats were to have the hegemony over the workers and their fees. Then followed more meetings, this time with Goldman of the Pocketbooks, subjecting the committee to a most scrutinous investigation—How many members? How many paying dues? How much money in the treasury? Any Communist influence?—all this was carefully taken down, and a decision by the next Executive Council meeting promised. Then began an endless postponement from week to week, more questions and more investigations, until finally, after five weeks of negotiations, the answer was given. No! Without any further explanations. The reaction to all this from the inexperienced unionists was utter disappointment and dejection. The Stalinists and their influenced victims naturally capitalized on the situation, again giving the same senseless arguments—the A. F. of L. does not want to organize workers, the A. F. of L. is only concerned about pocketing the money; as if this were their chief motive for refusing to affiliate with it, as if all this and more was not clearly pointed out by the Left Opposition and the decision was made to affiliate with the A. F. of L. despite all that. A Trade Union or a Sect? The Stalinists succeeded in nullifying the former decision and pushed through a vote—on a much smaller scale—to abandon negotiations with the A. F. of L. and affiliate with the T. U. U. L. It is worth mentioning that despite their activity, the vote was so slim that they had to resort to the method of denying a vote to the chairman—the chairman being a Left Opposition worker. The workers of the Mirror novelty trade must be made to realize that to continue with their present intentions means the end of their union. Affiliation to the paper trade union center of the T. U. U. L. can help in no way to build a genuine trade union able to extend its influence throughout the trade and become a real weapon to better the conditions of the workers. What is needed is a union, not a propaganda-resolutions-writing club for the Stalin bureaucrats. —MIRROR WORKER.

What comrade Trotsky says in reference to the present plebeian regime in the Soviet Union is juxtaposed with Dan's statement in reference to the dictatorship of the proletariat. Trotsky's analysis of the political character of the Stalinist bureaucracy is passed off as the analysis of the class character of the state in the Soviet Union. But perhaps we imply too much by inferring that the Lovestonites themselves know the differences between the bureaucratic apparatus that has usurped the authority of the October Revolution and the worker's state itself. Is it after all, excluded that the Lovestonites identify Stalinism with the dictatorship of the proletariat just as Dan identifies the dictatorship just as "with its wide flung apparatus"?

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PHILADELPHIA BANQUET To Celebrate our Fifth Anniversary Benefit The "MILITANT" On Sun. Dec. 24th, 8 P. M. at Our Local Headquarters 524 W. Thompson Street Admit One Subscription 25c Auspices: Communist League (Opposition) Philadelphia. BROWNVILLE SPARTACUS SOCIAL As a celebration of the second anniversary of Young Spartacus, the Brownville Spartacus Youth Club will hold a dance and social on Saturday, Dec. 16th at the Militant Hall, 154 Watkins Street.

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MASQUERADE BALL ON New Years Eve HOT JAZZ BAND Germania Hall, 16th St., & 3rd Ave. December 31st 1933 PRIZES FOR BEST COSTUMES Admission: 50 Cent. Auspices: New York Local, Communist League of America (Opposition)