American Workers Party Sends Letter on Unity

(Ed. Note.—We print below the letter of the American Workers Party on the question of fusion with the Communist League. In next week's MILITANT the reply of the National Committee of the Communist League will appear.

* * *

September 18, 1934

National Committee,
c/o Arne Swabeck,
Communist League of America,
144 Second Avenue,
New York City.

Dear Comrades:

Both your organization and ours have declared for the formation of a new revolutionary party of the workers, and for a new international as soon as conditions permit actual organizing efforts. We have all been working to this end during the past months. As a part of this work, several conferences have been held between committees of the American Workers Party and the Communist League of America. At these meetings the programmatic statement of the A.W.P. and certain phases of the program of the C.L.A. have been discussed in a frank and comradely spirit.

We believe sufficient headway has been made in these meetings to make it necessary for both of us finally to clarify the relation between our organizations and, if we are in essential agreement on fundamentals, to take concrete steps toward the accomplishment of organic unity. Your letter dated September 7 reached us toward the end of the Pittsburgh session of the P.O.C., after an exhaustive analysis of the general situation in the country and in the movement, and of the problem of unity before us, had been completed. We were glad to discover that you too arrived at the conclusion that discussion of organizational merger is the logical consequence of our earlier joint meetings.

You state in your letter that the revised edition of the Draft Program of the A.W.P. has come to your hand. This new edition was written after the conclusion of the discussions on program held between the committees of our respective organizations and with the content of the discussions in mind. It is our opinion that in all fundamental respects the revised program of the A.W.P. correctly states the position of the revolutionary party of the workers which we want to build.

Since the question of program is paramount and primary in the formation of the new party, we wish to learn from you, at the earliest date possible, whether you are prepared to accept this Draft Program as a working basis for the program of the new party. Should there be any question on your part as to certain formulations will you please include in your reply the versions which you choose to propose or sections which you wish to add, so that we may give them proper consideration?

Our program contains criticism, in some detail, of the principles and the activities of the Communist Party and the C. I. We hold that such criticism must be made and that a thorough critical analysis of all the revolutionary parties in the field is an indispensable part of the preparatory work in the building of the new party. However, we must take care that our criticism of C.I. and C.P. policies not only is not, but is free from any appearance of being, an attack upon the Soviet Union. We are sure that you will agree with us that the defense of the workers' fatherland to which so many have given lip-service is a major task of the new party; that in the light of the world situation such defense, as well as counteraction of the disastrous policies of the Communist International, can only be weakened by any attempt to build a new party within the S. U.; asd that these ends can be most rapidly and effectively achieved by the building of powerful revolutionary parties in the major capitalist nations and of the new Intersational. The establishment of an actually functioning workers' government in Russia, and the unbroken existence of the Soviet Union during these years of capitalist reaction and disintegration everywhere else, constitute an inspiring contribution to the world revolutionary movement. While the rise of the fascist powers in the west and the aggressive imperialism of Japan in the east may be taken as specific arguments in favor of careful statement in any criticism of the S. U., the fundamental solidarity of all revolutionary workers with the Russian Revolution is of basic significance. This is the paramount reason why a legitimate critical analysis of policies and attitudes should not be permitted to drift into a virtual attack. This utmost care in handling all matters concerning the S. U. is of cardinal importance to our task of building a revolutionary consciousness among the workers in our country as well as in all other lands. We think it is important to emphasize this point because, however justified C. L.A. criticisms of certain policies of the S.U. may have been, they have stood out in the public mind as the expression of an antagonistic attitude toward the S. U. It would be a great handicap in our efforts to build the new revolutionary party if we failed to clear up this point from the outset.

In the event of a favorable reply from you on the question of program, we are prepared to take immediate steps to bring about organic unity. This would mean, in the last analysis and as we understand it, the merger of the two organizations, the C.L.A. and the A.W.P., members of either organization ceasing to have any connection with any other political organization, national or international, save such as may be determined by the party to be formed as part of the effort to build the new international, and ceasing to issue or to participate in issuing any political organ save those sanctioned by the new party. We shall be ready to suggest a plan for accomplishing the merger and to consider any plan which you may wish to offer.

It is important that in seeking to bring about the organic unity we should go about it in such a manner as to make unity not only possible but likewise enduring. We specifically refer to the fact that in the past years our respective organizations have pursued somewhat different courses and attitudes. For a period of six years your membership has been engaged in a fierce political struggle with the C.P. and the C.I., and because of it they have developed a strong tendency to emphasize points of disagreement and an aptitude for dogmatism. Our organization has functioned primarily in the economic conflicts of the American labor scene and many of our members are but slowly coming to realize the significance of clear-cut theoretical positions. We know that your organization is consciously moving from sectarian existence toward conscious and purposive participation in mass movements. Likewise our members are developing the desired party and theoretical consciousness. There would be no point, however, in denying that members of political organizations do not easily discard habits of reasoning and acting. Consequently, our efforts at unity must cope with this state of affairs and we must exercise utmost care in working out the procedure.

We believe that the name A.W.P. should be the name of the new party, both because we consider this a name excellent and appropriate in itself and because it is already known to thousands of workers as the name of the new party. If, however, you have in mind a name which you consider more suitable, we are prepared to discuss it. We are convinced, though, that the name of the new party must not make use of the labels, "socialist" or "communist", because the use of either of them would tend to make the new party appear as a faction of or in some other way related to either the social-democracy or the communist international.

In the meantime, as we proceed with the steps aiming at organic unity, we propose that united activities, in which our organizations have been engaged for some time, be extended upon both a local and a national scale. We propose that a committee from each organization meet to draw up a plan for such united activities. Furthermore, we suggest that we attempt to make this plan a general model for the united activities of working class groups, and that we make every effort to secure its acceptance by the largest possible number of other working class groups. We wish that these united activities be entered into and continued whatever the immediate result in the matter of merging our organizations, since both our organizations, since both our organizathis kind with other groups.

We propose that all documents in these negotiations between our organizations be promptly published in the respective organs of the C. L.A. and the A.W.P., or if in any case this proves physically impossible, that they be made promptly available to the membership of both organizations in some other way.

Our organizations are agreed that these questions of unity and united action must not be delayed. No significant step toward unity in the revolutionary workers movement has been taken in a decade. The need for such a step is a matter of supreme importance. The building of the new revolutionary party is a first and indispensable item on the agenda of the workers' revolution.

Fraternally yours,
Provisional Organizing Committee
American Workers Party
A. J. MUSTE,
Chairman

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NO RECOVERY HERE

By PAUL SCHWALBE

The "New Deal" president has been in office for nearly two years. Billions of dollars have been spent by Roosevelt's administration on national recovery, the Soviet Union has been recognized, prohibition has ended. And yet there is no visible sign of that great American boom, the prosperity that was to follow the long depression years—to fill the empty pots with fat chickens and the equally empty garages with shiny cars—after these great anticipations had been fulfilled! On the contrary. The working class suffers more than ever.

The workers everywhere want to know why it is that the blight of unemployment and economic distress is still upon them, that so little is being done anywhere by anybody to give them real enlightenment. This, together with widespread and bitter personal poverty and a vast amount of ignorance among them concerning the causes of the sufferings, constitute the outstanding phenomena observed on a recent tour around New York in a 300 mile radius which included some strike territory in the textile centers.

Privation Everywhere

Times are hard, undeniably hard. From where the waves of the Atlantic beat upon the shore lines of New York and New Jersey to the confluence of the Hudson and Sacandaga rivers at Hadley and beyond, unemployment is general and widespread. It is not a fictitious situation concocted by radicals to plague Roosevelt's administration. It is a shameful and damning fact.

Large numbers of workers are angry and desperate. Many of them are openly advocating revolution and civil war. They know nothing of the system which grinds out the inequalities of wealth and poverty. All they know is that they are without work and starving in a land of plenty, with a host of parasites splurging on the top. Ragged families in dilapidated automobiles roam the country searching for work and something to eat. The weary, haunted look which appears on the faces of the heads of these families, and the despairing appearances of their withered wives and undernourished children make a picture the itinerant observer can never forget. Hungry men and boys tramping from here to there looking for work they will never find add to the impressiveness of a situation that is full of contingencies.

What the People Think About

In Albany, N. Y., a man of some local consequence predicted that if something is not done by somebody soon to alleviate the situation the "biggest strike riots this country ever saw would surely come".

Another man, a textile worker in Cumberland Mills, R. I., declared he was ready, right now, to take a gun and join in an armed uprising against Wall Street.

A sailor in Providence, in discussing unemployment, said he did not see how this country could be saved from revolution.

Such statements and declarations made over and over again by workers of all trades and all localities are the outspoken expression of the unrest and rebellion which rages in the hearts of these men. They were not uttered merely by jobless and hungry men. They were made by textile workers employed up till the present strike, sailors temporarily ashore, small farmers, small storekeepers and by workers on the job, all of whom, however, are conscious of their economic insecurity and fearful of the future.

Understanding Still Superficial

Seldom did one hear a single principle or proposition which cut through all the surface down to the basic cause of the depression—to the capitalist system. They do not know whether there is any system or any lack of system. They simply know they are out of work and starving. The small storekeepers knew they were near bankruptcy in their efforts to compete with the great chain stores and the small farmers were conscious they were losing their farms to the banks.

Precisely what is the matter, whom or what to hold responsible, and what might be done to remedy the conditions are questions in which the people generally are at sea.

Opportunity on the Slave Market

About 50 miles northwest, in the small town of Phillipsburg, a crowd similar in size and character to the Somerville aggregation had gathered at the promise of jobs. Further investigation revealed that the company had advertized for 30 stone quarriers. It was to be noted that they were all white and of native American stock. Their ages ranged from 20 to 40 years. Splendid specimens of physical manhood, they were a credit to the country that gave them birth. From their youth each of them had been taught that their country was a land of liberty and opportunity, that their government was the best and finest that could be devised, that a millionaire's fortune or the presidency of the United States awaited every bright young man who knew how to answer the call of opportunity, and that failure was due to no one but himself.

The sentiment of these men was distinctly against the receipt of charity. What they wanted was work. While outwardly good-natured, it was apparent they were in no mood to be trifled with and that if they could not get work they were not going to starve quiescently.

The stone quarriers in northern New Jersey have adopted the rotating process of giving the men three days work a week. Scores of industrial plants in the east—Newark, Elizabeth, Perth Amboy and smaller centers are closed down completely with their former employes wondering what next.

Coolie Conditions Come to America

In the Springfield district in Southern Massachusets it was said that laborers at $1 a day could be had in abundance.

To the matter-of-fact observer it looks as if the coolie conditions of China are making rapid progress in the United States.

Conditions in Coast towns from Massachusets and Connecticut down to New York and beyond are truly deplorable. How the workers are going to weather the coming winter is a mystery.

Is there any need to mention or describe the breadlines that meet one's horrified gaze? From Boston to New York to Philadelphia and on to Baltimore it was one continuous breadline, replete with men, women and children. Many of these charity applicants were unashamed as they took the bread and soup handed out so condescendingly. Others swallowed their pride with difficulty as they drove their miserable bodies to accept the food necessary to sustain life.

Aside from an armed uprising of the workers, measures of relief proposed by some were as amusing as they were futile. The popular opinion seemed to prevail that if President Roosevelt were not embarrassed by his opponents—the capitalists (!)—conditions would improve. Others thought that restoration of gambling, lotteries and the old-time saloon would bring good times again. Among other measures advocated were tariff changes, disarmament, a stiff foreign war that would kill off the unemployed. Some were outspoken for an acceptance of the situation with holy resignation, claiming that the depression was sent by God as a blessing in disguise.

Curiously interesting is the fact that quite a number of workers are sympathetic towards the Soviet Union. The news that the workers of Russia were all working while fifteen million Americans were without jobs contributed not a little to increasing dissatisfaction with present conditions.

Marxian Information Scarce

Diligent inquiry failed to unearth a solitary worker, outside of textile centers and large coastal cities, who had ever heard of the **Militant,** or who had ever read a communist publication. But every one had heard of Eugene V. Debs, Lenin and Trotsky. Very few had an intelligent conception of the Marxian philosophy, the communist program or objectives. The few more knowing ones were quite sure that the Soviet Union was a country where the workers had come into their own through revolution, but were ill-informed of the economic conditions on which the Soviet Republic rests.

Evidence of breakdown of capitalism are at every hand. The cry of "The Coming American Boom" echoes with the hollowness of its own mockery. In the entire history of the nation never was poverty more acute or distress more distracting and the outlook for the future so gloomy. The concentration of riches—greater than any nation ever knew before—into the hands of a privileged class is the essence of capitalism's infamy and the forerunner of capitalism's fall.

The working masses everywhere are looking now for a new revolutionary party that will guide them to understanding—to organization and action.

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A Gangster-Journalist

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cation.

"It is indeed fortunate for the true Americans to have a man like yourself as editor of an outstanding publication that will denounce the corrupt official and crooked politician which I believe is more dangerous, etc. . . . and your splendid paper should have among its subscribers all the real Americans.

"Twelve Americans had the communists here jumping out of second story windows and next Friday night there will be a meeting for the purpose of organizing 10,000 Veterans of all wars as the 'Shock Troops' of the Vigilantes and in the very near future the Vigilantes will issue their ultimatum to the Communists to pack their bag and baggage and leave the confines of this glorious city. If any questionable or politician dares to take sides with them, he may be called before the Tribunal to ANSWER.

"I believe that the Minneapolis Committee will soon secure their charter so that they can function under the head of this great institution and keep America for Americans.

"Again congratulating you, I remain,

"Yours sincerely,
"WILLIAM J. OTTS,
"Vigilantes of California.
"Director of Investigations
"San Francisco, Cal."

Two weeks later, in the **Press** edition of August 25, we read the following:

For God and Pocketbook

"Now get me right on this. I am interested first and last in the organization of a **Minnesota Vigilante.** I want that organization to get going—not after a while, but now!

"I want you business men, you **Americans,** to get together. . . . Just move around and talk this Vigilante matter over with some of your intimate and trusted friends. You'll be surprised to learn that they believe as you do—that **the time is here!** . . . There's never been a time in the history of these United States when the peril was greater than at present or the need as acute for a solid phlanax (G. Here he probably means p halanx) of **American citizens.** . . . There are twenty-three thousand communists in Minneapolis. Are there enough **American citizens** to form a Vigilante?" etc., ad naseum.

I have quoted at some length from Guilford's paper to indicate the venom and vulgarity with which it is written, and to show once more the connection between acts against the working class and fine talk of "Americanism" and "patriotism".

Incidentally, it is evident that the **Saturday Press** is quite cozily subsidized by those whose interests it serves. This paper is mailed free to all business houses in town, and any one interested can write in and get a free copy or have copies sent to all his friends gratis.

The Bosses' Scruples

This then is the way the Minneapolis employers, organized in their Citizen's Alliance, move against the workers. They think nothing of buying up a newspaper, lock, stock and barrel, and hiring its editor to propagandize throughout the state, by means of the paper, the radio and the "news service". They go further and praise a man of the foulest character, just as the Hitlerites sing hosannas to Horst Wessel. They underhandedly agitate for the creation of a Vigilante.

That such a newspaper as the **Saturday Press** continues to be published—this alone is enough to damn forever a society which permits such a journalistic excrescence to poison the air. And yet this paper is not only permitted but encouraged by the rulers of our capitalist society. A Marxian sociologist could discover from the columns of this paper the whole history and background of the festering corruption, gross dishonesty and hypocrisy, that is the lot of Minneapolis and of the nation today.

Incidentally, Guilford's death has of course been laid at the door of the communists. The man was probably wiped out by some of his gangster associates whom he had double-crossed, or possibly by some of the "solid" citizens whom he had blackmailed during his unscrupulous career.

Soviet Union Joins the League of Nations

(Continued from Page 1)

Nations, occupying therein the place due to itself and undertaking to observe all international obligations and decisions that are binding upon members in conformity with Article 1 of the covenant." (My emphasis, H. O.)

This statement is no different from any pacifist declaration which has been used to characterize the League ever since its inception. This pacifist statement is no accidental incident in the life of Stalinism. It is merely the continuation of the pacifist position that Stalinism has adopted at the Amsterdam Anti-War Congress which it has followed throughout the world in its other "Anti-War" organizations. Under Stalinism the Comintern has degenerated into a border patrol of the Soviet Union. It is not an instrument for revolution, and its fight against war degenerates into pacifism.

The pacifist illusions the Stalinists are sowing in the ranks of the working class, both through the Comintern and the foreign office of the Soviet Union, can be compared to the role of the Second International on the eve of the last world war. Now it is the Stalinist Third International which competes with the Second International for these reformist honors, on the eve of a new world war.

—HUGO OEHLER.

A Comment on Belgian United Front Pact

We printed in the September 8 issue of the **Militant,** for the information of our readers, the united front pact signed by the Belgian Young Socialist Guards, the Young Communist League and the Leninist Youth League. As previously stated the Young Socialist Guards, numbering some 35,000, are many times larger and more influential than the other two groups combined.

At this time we wish to call attention to section 4 of the pact as unacceptable to Marxists.

"4. The three organizations consider it logical and elementary to solemnly promise to establish a truce in their quarrels and cease reciprocal attacks in the course of the common action.

"Each organization promises not to attempt any maneuver for the purpose of winning away adherents from one another.

"It is understood that for the duration of the pact the organizations shall refrain from all insults, even outside of the joint action.

"However, outside of the joint action itself, each organization reserves for itself complete independence for the carrying on of its doctrinal propaganda."

The first paragraph is in direct conflict and incompatible with the last (and further restricted by the reservation of the Young Socialist Guard and the Young Leninist League on the right to criticize the foreign policies of the Soviet Union). What are the "quarrels" between the organizations for which a "truce" is established, if not precisely the "doctrinal propaganda" for which they reserve "complete independence"? None can be found. Independence is impossible without the right to criticize.

During a united front the participating parties do not establish a truce in their conflicting programs but rather accept a common minimum program and are bound by a discipline of action. Loyalty to voluntary agreement is essential for its effectiveness.

The right to criticize does not mean slandering and insulting. Working class bodies should refrain from such methods in all their dealings with one another, whether they are in a united front or not. "Maneuvering" in the sense of deceptive tricks is also alien to the tactical arsenal of workers' groups in their relation with one another.

To declare a "truce" between workers' organizations organizations is a non-aggression pact and cannot help, but rather hinders the common action and runs counter to the basic class interests of the workers. The Social Democratic leaders favor a non-aggression pact because they fear revolutionary criticism. The Stalinist bureaucrats submit to it because they have been ordered to form a united front at all costs and also fear criticism.

However, the Socialist ranks have their own reasons for supporting a non-aggression pact. They have observed the conduct of the Stalinists, their slanders and disloyalty; they have encountered Stalinist hooliganism at their meetings. They have little confidence, based upon previous experience, of the Stalinists carrying out an agreement. They demand a "guarantee" against Stalinist treachery.

But is a non-aggression pact a guarantee? Hardly. There are no guarantees against the miserable conduct of the Stalinists. A united front agreement can include a section pledging the participating parties not to indulge in slanders, etc. But it cannot, if a genuine united front is to be established, prohibit or restrict the right of criticism.

—Editor.

CANNON-BINGHAM DEBATE

One of the most interesting debates of the season is scheduled to take place Thursday, October 11, at Irving Plaza.

The subject of the debate will be: "Farmer-Labor Party or Revolutionary Marxist Party" Alfred Bingham, editor of **Common Sense** will take the side of the Farmer Labor Party and James P. Cannon will speak for a Revolutionary Marxist Party.

The Minneapolis strike provided the occasion for a concrete test of the role of the Farmer-Labor Party in regard to the struggles of the workers. The experiences of this strike give the scheduled debate an exceptional interest at the present time.

Both debaters are familiar with the events in Minneapolis and the part played in them by Governor Olson, the Farmer Labor Governor. Besides that, the debaters are experienced proponents of the conflicting party concepts. These facts assure a fair and thorough presentation of the question from each point of view.

Make a note of the date and place: Thursday, October 11, at Irving Plaza, 15th Street and Irving Place, New York.

Relief Vital for Textile Victory

(Continued from Page 1)

Cold Steel for Textile

And in that last response to the union demand you have the gist of the matter. By its own admission this Steel Board after months of existence is still investigating, workers are still being fired, Weirton Steel continues its old course.

It may be good politics for the bosses not to rush into print, heralding the findings and recommendations of the Inquiry Board as the "salvation of civilization" . . . and the safeguarding of their profits. It might make the textile workers sceptical of the whole business.

But for the union and its leaders to be silent, or to see in the report a basis for settlement, is not only not good politics, it is not good unionism and it is detrimental to the cause of the mill workers.

No Settlement a la Winant!

There is no need of sending the strikers back to work and then trying to settle the strike. This is a national and not a local battle. More workers are involved than ever before in any one labor struggle in this country. The militancy, the flying squadrons, are on a par with the most glorious class conflicts in American labor history. The third week of the strike finds the ranks tight as a drum. The textile strike can and must be won on the picket line. Victory is in sight. The bosses' ranks are becoming panicky. Under these conditions the attempt of any labor leader to settle the strike at this time on the basis of the Winant proposals would be treachery to the embattled mill workers.

Relief! Relief!

What is most needed now to see the strike through to a triumphant conclusion is relief, relief and relief. If the strikers are to win they must be fed. Who will feed them but their brother union?

William Green did lip-service to the strike when he announced his intention of calling a conference of the unions to arrange relief for the textile workers. But this conference has not taken place. It has been postponed to the A. F. of L. convention weeks off. What is this but sabotage of the workers? What is this but aid to the mill barons who want to starve the workers into submission?

No! The strike must not end on the basis of the Winant report.

Roosevelt wants to break the revolt like he did in steel and automobile.

Let labor answer with its best weapon—FIGHT!

Let the fight take the form of financial support—relief—and let labor tell Green to stop playing around with the lives of a half a million workers and back the strike not on a baptist pulpit but in action.

Then Roosevelt will join the whistling chorus led by George A Sloan and the strikers will march forward to victory.

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