

First National League Convention Stormy Test of 'American Approach'

This is the second of a series of articles on the history of the National Unemployed League.

By LOUIS BREIER

The convention that founded the National Unemployed League is worth considering in some detail not only because its results were far-reaching and lasting, but also because its stormy and colorful sessions revealed the dangers threatening the movement then, as they do now. Fascism, partisan-inertia, jingoism and a horde of crack-pot political schemes, any one of which was sufficient to wreck the convention and the movement itself, combined into a desperate onslaught against the building of a militant, nation-wide organization of the unemployed.

Backgrounds

The beginnings of the widely discussed and much more widely slandered "American Approach" are probably to be found in the C.P.A. conception of unemployed activity. It represented a definite and realistic manner of directing and participating in the work of the leagues, of carrying on the day by day struggles, of raising the political level of the workers and of building a solid and progressive basis for the ultimate conflict—against unemployment and all other problems confronting the working masses. It was this which distinguished C.P.A. practice and insured the steady growth of the Leagues.

How Others Work

Some mention has already been made of the methods favored by the Communist and Socialist parties. In their direction of the Unemployed Councils the C. P. made few concessions to the regular "party line" mechanical control of the organizations and wholesale indoctrination of the members while they "stick" is characteristic

PERKINS' DAUGHTER ENTERS SOCIETY

Miss Susanna Wilson made her debut to society the other day, at the Hotel Pierre, one of New York's swankiest hotels, where thousands of dollars are spent to launch a girl into society.

What of it? Only this: Susanna Wilson is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Caldwell Wilson. And Mrs. Paul Caldwell Wilson is Frances Perkins, Secretary of Labor, who feels so sorry for the workers, in public.

FOLLOW THE NEWS IN THE NEW MILITANT.

The Party Fund

THE campaign for the Party Fund is now under way. Returns are beginning to come in though not yet as fast or as numerous as they should. Reports from the branches are still slow, but indications are that the membership is getting behind this drive wholeheartedly. Los Angeles branch writes "We are sure the drive will go over big here". A definite pledge of \$26 was made and more to come from absent members. Allentown members pledged \$38. Boston has already met more than half of its quota. The New York District which received a quota of \$1,500 is hard at work meeting it and Philadelphia has pledged \$75 thus far.

THE CHALLENGE

As reported in the last issue of the New Militant, Mrs. M. of New York pledged to contribute \$200 for every \$200 we collect from other friends. R. S. was the first to send a \$200 check which was promptly met by Mrs. M. Today R. S. sent another \$100.

RECEIPTS

Previously reported:	
From Branches	\$316.20
From Individuals	7.00
R. S. and Mrs. M.	400.00
New Receipts	
Los Angeles Branch	\$ 11.25
New York District	50.00
M. McL., Iowa Falls, Ia.	2.00
A Friend, Youngstown, O.	10.00
R. S., New York City	100.00

Total to date:	
From Branches	\$377.45
From Individuals	319.00
From Mrs. M. on pledge	200.00
Grand Total	\$896.45
As soon as the balance to make up \$400 from individuals comes in, Mrs. M. will meet it with a second \$200.	

RUSH YOUR REMITTANCE.

HAVE YOU SUBSCRIBED TO YOUR

PARTY FOUNDATION CERTIFICATE

ONE DOLLAR
FIVE DOLLARS
TEN DOLLARS

We can supply collection lists for those who cannot afford any one of these sums by themselves. A certificate will be issued for the total collected.

Members of the organization will receive certificates equal to their Party Foundation Tax paid through the branches.

HELP REALIZE THE PROGRAM OF ACTION

HELP BUILD THE WORKERS PARTY

Fill in Blank Below and Mail Today.

Workers Party of the U. S.
112 East 19th St. Room 702
New York City.

Enclosed find \$..... for a Party Foundation Fund Certificate. OR — Send me..... collection lists for the Party Foundation Fund.

Name

Address

City

State

For publicity use the name

of their work in this field as among the trade unions.

The tactics of the Socialist Party only by the addition of their usual smugness and the myth of their superior regard for "Democracy". Because of this, mechanical control as practiced by the S. P. exceeds anything that even Amter or Benjamin ever hoped to get away with.

Appearing before the executive committee of the NUL last August to present the case for a "new national organization" David Lasser, president of the Socialist-controlled Workers Unemployed Union, stated frankly that he does not believe in rank and file conventions even for the purpose of resolving so important a problem as the formation of a new national unemployed organization, but prefers conferences of the top leadership because "they get more work done with less fuss".

The "American Approach"

Although their tactics placed them in the position of an artist attempting to portray the moon with a mop, the C. P. conception of the purpose of work among the unemployed on the part of a revolutionary party was always sound. It is the business of the class-conscious, revolutionary elements in these organizations to make them militant, effective instruments for struggle against all forms of immediate repression, and to turn the faces of the unemployed toward the larger battle. This was always the philosophy underlying the work of the CPLA.

But philosophy as such never meant anything to the CPLA. Philosophy had to be confirmed in action and there had to be mass organizations before there could be any action.

In a series of articles written for Labor Age in 1931 Louis Budenz, who popularized the term "American Approach", laid down the program for unemployed organization. Leagues, he said, must be mass organizations in the fullest sense of the term. CPLA elements in these organizations must not repeat the doctrinaire and factional mistakes of the C.P.—and the S.P. They were to work to increase the effectiveness of the Leagues in their daily battles for immediate demands and, on the strength of their superior leadership and consistent realism, raise the political level of the masses, reveal the class-struggle, and lay a firm basis for their participation in the coming struggle for a workers' world.

During the first national conven-

tion of the Leagues, when Fascist elements seemed to have gained complete control and it was necessary to pronounce the name of Marx in very soft tones and with a great deal of head pivoting, several of the leaders of the present Federal Councils who were present blamed the "American Approach" for it. The CPLA, they said, had substituted flag-waving for Marxism and those roaring patriots in the convention were only a natural consequence of social-fascism.

But these derisives of the true faith were wide of the mark. It was not the "American Approach" that was at fault; it was America. As we have shown, the unemployed leagues were all-inclusive. The only restrictions on membership were against old party politicians and bosses of any category. These restrictions, however, could not exclude stool pigeons, provocateurs,

A Farewell to Bureaucracy

By JOSEPH ZACK

In the previous article I spoke about the system of falsification and trickery used by the Stalin faction in the ideological struggle against the Opposition in the Russian Communist Party. This system naturally expressed itself also in the field of party organization. The false line could be put through only by crushing out party democracy and setting up the uncontrolled rule of a bureaucratic clique. This was done in the Russian party, and then the completed system was mechanically imposed on all the parties of the Communist International.

We in the American movement had to pay for the defeat of Leninist principles and methods in the Russian party. The degeneration of the American C. P. can never be understood until it is traced to this source. The internal regime of the C. P. in this country is only an expression of the Stalinist system which has become universal in the C. I.

Suppressing the Opposition

They began in Russia by suppressing the platform of the Opposition instead of abiding by party statutes and allowing its publication as a document for discussion. Next, they expelled the 14 members of the minority of the Central Committee before the party congress! Meanwhile all their followers were expelled from the party. The result was that when the party congress finally convened it was a mere assemblage of Stalin's caucus.

Later on, all those adhering to the Opposition were arrested and exiled to Siberia or imprisoned. Thus the Opposition was "disposed of". Thereafter anyone voicing its ideas was dealt with as a "counter-revolutionist", picked up at night by the G.P.U. and shipped somewhere—sometimes, as in the case of Blumkin, even executed. Now it appears this sort of thing is to be carried out on a wholesale scale. This is the background of the present terror regime in the Soviet party and the parties in capitalist countries, including the U. S. This regime constitutes a fundamental departure from Lenin's conception of the party and its functions; it is a basically new system that has nothing to do with Leninism. It is of course foolish to think, and I was about a fool, that by complaining about it or appealing against one or another bad spot or ulcer in this system to the E.C.C.I., a sub-committee of Stalin, any remedy can be obtained.

The Stalin Regime

The party regime introduced by Stalin throughout the Communist International is as follows:

1. Centralism, minus inner democracy.
 2. Hierarchical method of selecting the leading personnel from the top down.
 3. The method of putting this across with a semblance of "democracy" and greasing the workings of the execution of the general line set from the top; a system of "ratification" from below to confirm the selection from the top.
- Since those who might have any principled objection to this system as a whole are either eliminated or drop out of the movement beforehand, there is very little or no trouble in getting things "ratified" or "approved" in that form.
- The theory to justify the whole system and make it appealing is: (1) Solid iron Bolshevik unity of our party; (2) we are a party that thinks and acts alike; (3) only a monolithic party can be mobile, ready to act at a moment's notice, etc.

As good as this sounds, it is all false, because the democratic processes essential to arrive at such results are eliminated. Once the basic principal line of a revolutionary party—dictatorship of the proletariat, overthrow of capitalism versus social democratic peaceful, gradual transformation of capitalism into socialism—is set, many opinions of major importance may arise from time to time as to how to achieve it. There cannot be such a thing as "people that think alike" on

spies, fascist agents, etc. They came in and did their work among the members until they were exposed or until the growing political consciousness of members themselves made them impervious to this poison.

It was the latter condition for which the CPLA worked. In the leagues, as in the general American scene, the effectiveness of a revolutionary organization is based on its ability to win the confidence and leadership of the masses as against the misleadership of the demagogues and fascists. The CPLA was not afraid to face this fact. It did not want another radical tea club. It wanted a mass organization. And it was willing to stake everything on the correctness of its tactics and its ability to lead the workers. The not only of the courage and integrity of the CPLA but also on a minor scale of the ability and promise of the new party which has emerged from the combined experiences of the CPLA and the Communist League.

Next week we will see what happened at the first national convention of the Leagues.

March of Events

Naval Race Forebodes War of the Pacific

By JACK WEBER

The first international imperialist truce in the building of naval armaments has come to its predestined end. Theoretically it will remain in force till 1936; practically the powers are already at work to start off anew in the race for capitalist domination of the world. Lasting for a decade, the Washington Naval Pact was nothing but a temporary truce, affording a breathing spell to the nations just emerged from war into a critical economic and political period that necessitated the most far-reaching changes and adjustments among the imperialist robber nations. In the war Europe, victors and vanquished alike, had lost, America had won. Germany had been ruined, but England was also badly shaken and her world position so much weakened that

she could no longer demand and enforce by might of arms complete supremacy on the seas. America had captured the world's trade, had become a creditor nation on a par with the foremost foreign investor, England. This victory, American capitalism meant not only to retain but to extend at the expense of all other capitalist rivals until it would command that imperialist hegemony of the world that proper play to its advanced technique. To signalize its newly gained strength, America started afresh, on the very eve of the peace conference, a naval plan that "stunned the world!"

The Imperialist Naval Race

It was the "peace" President Wilson, who proposed the 1916 naval plan that was to give America the largest fleet in the world. He proposed to construct in three years the most powerful dreadnoughts afloat, that would render obsolete all the navies in the world. This program was interrupted by the entrance of the U. S. into the war but at its conclusion, just before Wilson sailed for Paris, he said to Congress: "I take it for granted that the Congress will carry out the naval program which was undertaken before we entered the war."

In the new 1919 program it was then proposed that in three years America should build sixteen capital ships, besides a large number of cruisers and destroyers. Although England then possessed a bigger navy than all the rest of the world combined, this ambitious program would have placed the U. S. in first place on account of the size of first-Jutland super-dreadnoughts to be built, their weight of armor and guns. The armament race was on!

The new war was to be a decisive battle for supremacy in the Pacific, a conflict for the complete control of the only market still unboiled among the imperialist free-boaters—China. Primarily this meant a ruthless struggle between America and Japan. Hence Japanese imperialism, despite its relative poverty in money and resources, was forced as a matter of its national capitalist life to respond by starting the construction of even bigger ships with heavier armament and guns than those proposed by America. Nor was England to be outdone, for she too began the laying down of vessels to be the largest in the world.

these matters. There can be, by majority decision, unity of action through discipline, yes, and this is all that Lenin aimed at in his conception of centralization and proletarian democracy. Not every little thing need be discussed by everybody; but the big things, these are precisely the ones that must be discussed and decided democratically. Stalinism allows the discussion of little things; the big questions are decided from on top.

Conditions for Real Discussion

There can be no such thing as a real discussion without giving equal opportunity to the advocates of various platforms and allowing groupings of opinion and their representation up till the convention. Lenin even allowed it on the Central Committee. But after a decision has been made democratically, all must carry it out in action. This is the essence of democratic centralism as Lenin taught it and as the party practiced it in Lenin's time.

All these rights still exist, largely, in the rules and by-laws and even in the official theory of the Comintern. But who can truthfully deny that in practice they have abolished all and sundry? What hypocrisy to preach to others about "inner democracy"—as the Daily Worker does to the Socialist Party—when inner democracy has been murdered in the ranks of the C. P. itself!

There cannot be such a thing as "forbidden" subjects in a discussion amongst those who stand on the principle of the overthrow of capitalism and Soviet power. Otherwise there cannot be either "discussion" or inner democracy. But this is precisely what Stalin's system has created—only Stalin's views are "kosher"; the rest are excommunicable. Let the doctors of Stalinism, on the basis of this kind of a recipe, create a better inner life in the party. Even if they were professors they would be wasting their time; it cannot be done. The party is dying of inner sterility, of dry rot, because the system is false to the core.

In a previous issue of the New Militant I have already explained, except for some minor details, the inner workings of the party machine under this system. I only want to add an item or two.

Show Business

There is still in the party the staging of so-called "discussions". Of course, these are not discussions at all, but mere "talkings to" or "explanations" of the line already laid down from above; one is allowed only to discuss its "application". There is also the staging of conventions and plenums at which the mere rumor of some one's dissenting creates a sensation. Prior to the convention there is supposed to be a 60-day discussion period. The press is opened for discussion articles, etc., etc. My dear readers, look over the last convention discussion of the C. P.—the most senseless and flabby thing yet seen on such occasions. You may be deceived into thinking that in all the problems facing the working-class there is not one dissenting opinion; in fact, it is made to appear that there is no variety whatever—they all agree on everything!

The followers of Stalin boast that Stalin united the party more than Lenin ever succeeded in doing. And he did—by killing the internal life of the party!

What are the "discussions" that take place, after all? Well, the "big shot" makes a lengthy report. Then everybody talks his head off about his own troubles in the district, section or unit, hardly mentioning the report of the "big shot", or in order to be perfectly "kosher", quoting one thing or another from it. At the end of this "discussion" the line of the report is approved. If anyone disagrees, he leaves his disagreement for perhaps a better time.

Nothing is threshed out in particular. If there is a "new line" in the report it is put in suavely in order "not to alarm the party" and to safeguard the continuity of the line and the infallibility and con-

tinuity of leadership. In brief, the convention is treated as a sort of glorified mass meeting, where "the line" is talked into you. Nothing is expected to happen and nothing does happen. Everything is cut and dried.

This Stalinist system of talking to the gallery has its strongest appeal to new, politically inexperienced members—that is, for a while—and there is always a hullabaloo about the promotion of new forces, etc. The older militants are not in favor. They simply don't like it, although they don't know what the real trouble is.

At general membership meetings, which are hardly ever held nowadays, questions are very often asked on unsigned slips of paper—a custom emanating from Soviet Russia, for even questions are at times dangerous.

How is it in the Soviet Union? Worse. There one really takes a chance by thinking out loud, not only on big questions but often on little ones as well. If you are a new one you may get away with it for a while. But "watch your step!" No heavy talk. This is the inner life, the atmosphere created by Stalin's system in the life of the party.

In the next article I will deal with the policies and methods that form part of this system as practiced in this country, with special reference to the trade union question.

How The Middle Class Led "Freed" Negroes After Civil War "The Republican Party Is the Ship and All Else Is the Sea," Leader Told Them

This is the second of a series of articles on Negro Labor in the United States.

By SIMON WILLIAMSON

It was but natural that the Negro middle class should become the first spokesman and leader of the newly "freed" Negroes during the early post-Civil War period. It represented whatever culture and influence the race then possessed. It was cognizant of this fact and was not long in taking advantage of its new opportunity.

Even during the antebellum days this middle class was composed of servants and freedmen. The freedmen had either bought their freedom or won it through some act of benevolence to their masters and in some instances they were the proud owners of Negro slaves. The servants and this class were artisans who had been given long periods of apprenticeship under master craftsmen. They were the craftsmen of their masters. This class represented, then, the most militant spirits of the Negro slaves, and they despised the poor whites since many of the latter had been employed as overseers and, moreover, it was they who were used to catch runaway slaves. The white master class, even then, was shrewd enough to play one against the other.

Frederick Douglass

Shortly after the emancipation of the American Negroes from chattel slavery Frederick Douglass, the most outstanding Negro in the abolitionist movement and the most towering figure that black America has yet produced—the last of his type that the Negro bourgeoisie will ever produce—discovered that the white ruling class kept both white and black in subjection by playing one against the other. In an interview, heading a committee of Negroes, with president Andrew Johnson, who arrogated to himself the leadership of the poor whites, seeking equal citizenship for the blacks, he is recorded as having said to Johnson:

"The hostility between whites and blacks is easily explained. It has its root and sap in the relation of slavery and was incited on both sides by the cunning slave masters. Those masters

secured their ascendancy over the poor whites and the blacks by putting enmity between them."

"They divided both and conquered each," continued Douglass. "There was no earthly reason why the blacks should not hate and dread the poor whites when in a state of slavery. It was from this class that their masters recruited their slave catchers, slave drivers and overseers."

Although no one knew better than Douglass that whites and blacks were played against each other by the opulent whites, he joined the latter and proclaimed upon the platform, "The Republican Party is the ship and all else is the sea." Other lights of the Negro middle class of that period followed the example shown by Frederick Douglass and entered politics on the side of the exploiting class for self gain. They, like the white bourgeoisie, only on a smaller scale, are the enemies and exploiters of black labor. They would exploit white labor if permitted by their white capitalist ally.

The delegation of Negroes that appeared at the convention of the National Labor union in 1869 had as its most able Negro representatives John M. Langston, lawyer and later congressman from Virginia, and P. B. S. Pinchback, lieutenant-governor of Louisiana. Both men were members of the Republican Party, which the union considered as a land monopoly, and were not in the least concerned about the precarious conditions of Negro

Necessity for Truce

In comparison with the Anglo-German naval race of 1907 to 1914, the pre-war affair was a mere bagatelle from every point of view. The cost of the new construction to the U. S. alone would have been more in three years than Germany had spent in twenty-five. And this does not take into account the indirect costs for new docks and harbors to house the new fleet, besides the fortifying of Pacific fuel bases to render the fleet effective.

The cost became a particularly disturbing factor when the slump of 1920 occurred. Then too the Panama Canal acted to limit the new race. For this Canal could afford passage only to the size of vessel allowed for in the American plan, whereas to meet the forty-three and forty-five thousand ton ships of the Japanese and English plans, the U. S. would have had to build ships that could not be passed through the Canal. The threat of an immediate war between America and Japan in 1921 found American capitalism in a difficult position too, since it did not possess any adequate base of operations close enough to the new scene of conflict.

For these and other reasons American imperialism found itself forced to build down temporarily and to call for a truce in the naval race started by itself. The result was the Washington Pact of 1922. In this pact the size of battleships was limited to those capable of traversing the Panama Canal, the five-five-three ratio was accepted (England thus yielded its historic mastery of the seas), the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was abrogated, at least in words, and an agreement was arrived at not to fortify the Pacific Islands any further. In the present situation all this stands nullified. Japanese capitalism feels itself firmly enough entrenched in Manchuria, the historic starting-point for all invasions into China, to continue her adventure further. Her demand for naval parity throws down the gauntlet to American imperialism at a time considered favorable by the Japanese militarists. American imperialism must refuse the challenge. The War of the Pacific seems close at hand.

labor in the South. At first the situation refused to sent Langston and Pinchback on the grounds that they were office holders. Finally they made a blunder and seated Pinchback. Langston was not seated on the grounds that he was steering up race prejudice. Langston, thereupon, accused Cameron, his accuser, of being an emissary of the Democratic Party. Both men rightly accused the other. Both Langston and Pinchback sought equal citizenship for Negroes, but were opposed to the union's idea of organizing a reform party. They saw their salvation in the Republican Party. They were interested in personal wealth, not labor solidarity.

During this same period John R. Lynch, Negro congressman from Mississippi, virtually got on his knees and begged the Democratic party to change its policy and accept Negroes who disagreed with the tenets and policies of the Republican Party. These early middle class Negro leaders like their present day successors would accept anything for franchise but the organization of white and black labor. Yet their influence and the influence of their successors still goes far with the Negro masses.

However, in the Baltimore state convention of colored labor of 1869 Wesley Howard, a Negro working class leader, told the Negro working men, through their delegation present, that the franchise without the organization of labor would be of little or no benefit. Howard was ignored. His ideas were not of the Negro middle class. His influence was not as great as that of Douglass, Langston or Pinchback but his vision was broader in scope. Had the black proletariat of America followed his advice organized labor could tell a different story, and the economic status of black America would be much better.

Despite the setbacks of black labor the spectre of Howard's foresight and militancy is hovering over black America again and neither Negro middle class reaction nor white bourgeois chicanery can stop it from taking form.

Lastly, let it be remembered that the Negro Middle class are not interested in the abolition of wage slavery any more than the white bourgeoisie. All that they have ever been or will ever be interested in is the securing of advantages for their group. Segregation is one means of providing this.

Next week we shall deal with the Knights of labor and the Negro workers.

BOOK SALE

20-50% DISCOUNT
One Week Only—January 5th to 12th
BOUND VOLUMES OF THE MILITANT
While They Last
July 1931-Dec. 1932 \$2.50
1933 1.50
1934 1.50

ORDER NOW
PIONEER BOOK SHOP
102 East 11th Street, N. Y. C.