

Choice of Name Biggest Achievement of S.P. Unemployed Meet

"A Socialist Party Congress" Protests Virginia Delegate

By Special Correspondent

On March 2 to 4 about 120 people met in Washington and gave a good illustration of how not to build a fighting national unemployed organization. Delegate Bernstein from Richmond, Va., himself a member of the Socialist Party, correctly characterized the procedure when he said on the floor:

"It seems to me that I have attended the finest Socialist Party convention that I ever heard of. We came here for a non-partisan convention. Most of the people in Virginia are Democrats."

It was plainly evident that the leaders of the convention were interested chiefly in setting up an organization that could be safely controlled by Lasser or the Workers Unemployed Union of New York, Rasmusen of the Illinois Workers Alliance, Trager of the Peoples Unemployed League of Maryland, Lieberman of the Unemployed Citizens League of Pittsburgh and Benson of the Florida Federation of Unemployed Leagues.

The Illinois Workers Alliance, a genuine unemployed organization with over 100 functioning locals and a large membership was put on the same level with the insignificant Florida Federation of Unemployed Leagues. Illinois had 16 votes and Florida had 15. The 15 Florida votes were cast by one man, Benson. Indiana cast 12 votes despite the fact that the delegate reporting for that state admitted that it had only a few leagues and only "between four and five thousand members."

Benjamin Approves

According to the Daily Worker for March 4, Herbert Benjamin of the C.P. National Unemployment Councils, was the dominating figure at this S.P. convention and got a big ovation, "the only ovation given any speaker by an audience who heard among others, Norman Thomas, Socialist Party leader. Standing cheering, the delegates greeted Benjamin's impassioned plea for unity... with shouts of 'We'll fight for that!' They blocked the aisle, shaking Benjamin's hand... David Lasser... came by and told Benjamin, 'I think we are moving in the right direction at last.'"

So distorted and non-factual was the report that Benjamin the next day submitted a statement to the convention saying that he was sorry the Daily Worker had published such a report and that correction would be made.

Following out the new C.P. turn to the Right, Benjamin capitulated completely to the Lasser-Rasmusen-

son-Trojar-Trager-Cook-Lieberman combination. He approved of the convention and told the delegates it was "a step in the right direction".

Rev. Myers Speaks

On Sunday afternoon the convention was addressed by James Myers, of the Federal Council of Churches. Rev. Myers made an appeal for the religion of Jesus and the prophets. There was applause when he said that "real religion believes in democracy." "Any economic system," said Myers, "that deprives a man of the right to work is immoral. We are an immoral nation."

There was a great deal of this sort of activity but it did not seem to strike the convention that it was necessary to put in time and energy on the real active problems that daily face unemployed organizations. There was a tendency—despite much talk about class consciousness—to make it appear that real good could be accomplished by talking to congressmen and the President's secretaries.

Selecting a Name

Much time was consumed on the selection of the name for the new organization. Workers Alliance of America was finally agreed on. There was strong sentiment against using the word "unemployed" in the name. Rasmusen said that "the name must be nation-wide, powerful, easy to symbolize and easy to go on a button."

The constitution provides that only organizations can become members of the W.A.A. They must not be affiliated with any other organization having the same purpose.

A resolution was adopted instructing the national executive board to call a conference—not later than three months away—of the executive committees of other national unemployed organizations to discuss procedure for merger and unity. The constitution empowers the N.E.B. to work for the amalgamation of all unemployed organizations and to sit in on conferences and conventions of unemployed organizations. The leaders of the convention were, in fact, forced by a storm of protest to withdraw a resolution which assumed that they were building the national organization of the unemployed.

N.U.L.'s Position On Convention

The National Unemployed League was invited to be a part of this convention but declined to participate on the ground that:

- 1. It was not to be a rank and

file convention composed of delegates democratically elected by real and functioning unemployed organizations. 2. Basic units or "locals" of real unemployed organizations would not be given opportunity to elect delegates to the convention. 3. The convention set-up was manipulated from the top by Lasser, Rasmusen and other Socialist Party minor functionaries for the purpose of securing S. P. control of the organization when formed. 4. That the method of voting to be followed (fifteen to each state regardless of the number and size of its bona-fide unemployed organizations) would tend further to make the convention undemocratic and non-rank and file.

Anthony Ramuglia, president of the N.U.L. and E. R. McKinney, editor of Mass Action, organ of the N.U.L. were present at the convention. Ramuglia in his address assured the convention that the N.U.L. now as ever stands ready to participate loyally and enthusiastically in any movement to unify unemployed organizations on a sound basis, but would refuse to have any part in any sectarian attempt to impose an organization on the unemployed from the top.

N R A Speed-Up and Police Brutality Hit in St. Louis

Three Thousand in Mass Meeting

By Special Correspondent

ST. LOUIS, Mo.—Goaded to the breaking point by the speed-up under the NRA and the union-smashing tactics of employers and police, workers in St. Louis finally made their protests heard in a mass meeting arranged by the Central Trades Council held in the new Civic Auditorium.

The immediate cause of the protest was a strike at the Forest City Mfg. Co., a garment-making plant where police escorted scabs from the A. A. Ahner Detective Agency through the picket lines, and even sent patrol wagons and police scout cars to the homes of the strikebreakers, then arrested nine workers on the picket line, most of them young girls. Appearing in court several days later, four of the workers were charged with assault and battery! One of the girls so charged weighs 110 pounds.

The Usual Story

Behind this strike lies the usual NRA story of inhuman speed-ups in the garment industry. Last year the employers evaded the code by putting all work on a piece-work or "task" basis. In order to make the minimum wage of \$13 a week a worker had to be very fast. Many girls, unable to stand up under the terrific strain, lost their jobs.

This system was all right in slack times. But when orders began coming in faster the bosses were faced with a labor shortage.

To reduce the "task" so that more girls could meet the minimum requirements, meant a loss of profits. Instead, a special group to be known as "privileged" workers was employed. These workers were not privileged, as a naive reader might suppose, to be paid the minimum wage whether they met the quota or not. They were "privileged" to work for less than the minimum of \$13!

The Forest City firm not only violated the agreement it had reached with the workers in the strike in 1933, but it hired a nationally notorious strike-breaking agency, the A. A. Ahner Agency, sometimes known as the Industrial Research and Engineering Co.

Scab Agencies Work

Operatives of the scab agency were put into the plant. Loyal union girls were not even allowed to go to the washroom two at a time. They were threatened with loss of employment and even with physical violence for joining the I.L.G.W.U.

At last the conditions became so unendurable that a strike was called.

Green Views Auto Failure

(Continued from Page 1)

F. of L. up to now to secure better conditions for the workers is not likely to inspire confidence.

The bosses are on the alert to try to crush any move toward organization. They are speeding up production to the utmost to get through the season before trouble can develop. Although there is sentiment for unionization and strike it is doubtful whether it can crystallize soon enough to produce widespread strike struggles in the present season.

What is needed in Detroit is a group of trade union militants who are not bound by a cut-and-dried formula, but approach the problems of the auto workers in a realistic fashion. Only such a group with a fighting class policy can lead the way to the formation of a powerful industrial union in the auto industry.

Fur Union Must Move Carefully for Unity; Cannon's Advice Still Holds

By Trade Union Dept. of W.P.

Unity of the Fur Workers of N. Y. in one organization seems assured. The conditions under which such unity will be achieved are another matter. The Industrial Union after a great deal of squabbling among the leaders, is now discussing openly with the membership the ways of accomplishing unity. This step, belated though it is, is a correct one.

Conditions in the fur trade are steadily worsening. Active, militant members of the Industrial Union, barred from the shops, are walking the streets. The chief task of the remnants of the International is fighting the Industrial Union. The latter, isolated from the main body of needle workers, crippled by the fight with the International, its policies juggled back and forth with each shift in the "correct Stalinist line", is in no position to defend its membership against the attacks of the bosses. It is now forced, not by

a correct appreciation of the condition and needs of the furriers, but by the hundred and eighty degree turn in the "general line", to come out for unity under the A. F. of L.

Proposals of Industrial Union

What does the Industrial Union, or rather its Stalinist leadership, propose? A leaflet issued by the Fur Workers Industrial Union and distributed in the market this week sets forth the following proposals:

1. "An open conference with the council, to build one union uniting the forces of the workers against the bosses and contractors for jobs, wages and conditions."

2. An immediate stop to the criminal, bloody battle. The organization of unity on the basis of a union program assuring unity to all furriers regardless of color, race, nationality or political affiliation.

3. No discriminations. No clique dictatorships. Complete guarantee of the democratic rights of every worker. A union of the workers and for the workers.

"The Lovestonites are opposed to our proposal and program; so are all other dishonest demagogues, politicians and fakers. But the furriers are for it, and that is what counts!"

"We are ready and willing to join with the Council in building an A. F. of L. Union. But should the Council refuse we shall be forced to continue with the battle to the finish. And we are confident that the militant furriers, who have won every conflict in the past 3 years, will not fail in this one."

Writing editorially in the Militant, March 24, 1934, almost a year ago, Comrade James P. Cannon proposed that the Industrial Union should immediately start a campaign for unity under the American Federation of Labor. He said:

"First, it can demand a charter from the International with only one condition; that the local retain its autonomy and the right to choose its own officials. If that is refused, a proposal can be made to unite the two local organizations into a single body affiliated to the International, and consequently to the A. F. of L., with officials to be elected in a supervised election of the united organization. Third, the Left wing union can declare its intention to campaign for the amalgamation of all the needle trades unions into one industrial organization affiliated to the A. F. of L."

"If such proposals are made known to all the furriers, and combined with a widespread agitation for unity throughout the needle trades, they will awaken a hearty response from the workers, strengthen the sagging morale of the Left wing and put an enormous pressure on the officials of the International including their Lovestonite come-ons..."

"The Stalinist bureaucrats in charge of the Left wing furriers' union, of course, will oppose such a strategy and will try to suppress any free discussion of it in the union. But these ideas will make their way just the same. They are stronger than the apparatus of the bureaucrats because they correspond to the burning needs of the workers. And, in addition, they indicate the only way to save the furriers' organization from the debacle which overtook all the other sections of the Industrial Union."

NRA Batters Labor Income

(Continued from Page 1)

authoritative on the subject of unemployment, show that 11,900,000 workers were unemployed in June 1933, and that 10,800,000 workers were unemployed in December 1934. The total decline—rampse to be the "new deal"—was the magnificent number of 1,100,000. (Roosevelt invariably speaks, making the figures up by wishful thinking, of 4,500,000 re-employed.)

Real Wages Drop

Total labor income (non-farm) which was \$2,300,000,000 in June 1933, had risen by December 1934 to \$2,600,000,000. The total gain was \$300,000,000. Measured against the increase in total of workers employed, this gain, per capita, comes to absolutely nothing. Allowance made for the upward movement in living costs, per capita purchasing power has positively declined.

Does this proposition seem incredible? Then consult the NRA's own estimates. In June 1933 the national income, adjusted for cost of living, stood at \$5,700,000,000. In December 1934, adjusted for cost of living, the national income stood at \$5,000,000,000. These estimates are extremely conservative. Conservative as they are, they show that the "new deal" to date has lowered living standards which were already abominably low. Not all the apologies in the NRA's bag of tricks can wipe out this fact.

Building Union Leads Toledo FERA Strike

(Continued from Page 1)

be set up with equal representation from the Building Trades Council and the new organization. Negotiation and other committees to be set up in a similar fashion.

7. That a general mass meeting is to be held Tuesday or Wednesday for the further consolidation of the organization and to set up a functioning strike machinery.

8. That a general FERA strike is officially declared, including all FERA workers.

Protests against the recruiting of strikebreakers, to replace the FERA workers already out on strike, by social service workers, also were made by the B.T.C.

At the same time County Relief Administrator James S. Thompson sent to Fred Payne, president of the C.L.U., a letter urging the skilled workers to return to FERA projects, "until the new program is started from Washington". He made every sort of appeal, from the sentimental one that the tuberculosis hospital needs completing (so that the workers' underfed children will have a place to go, Mr. Thompson?) to the practical one that Toledo is losing money because it is not using its FERA allowances.

He promised to make every effort to get budgets increased.

Toledo's workers are learning how to see that such promises are kept—through mass pressure.

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