

One Year of the Workers Party

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pseudo-progressives in the unions, etc.) precisely at the moment when Stalinism most openly takes on the role of social-patriotic betrayal. Bureaucratic centrism and social democratic centrism meet to consummate the betrayal, to make it more certain by creating in the mind of the masses the illusion of strength through "unity."

It is in such a period of reaction as we have described that the old Internationals finally break down—i.e. in the sense of succumbing to opportunism and social-patriotism and irrevocably losing the capacity to serve as a progressive force. In "normal" times the process of degeneration is not obvious, it still appears that the working class under its leadership is "making progress." This also means that the "new" International comes into being in the period of reaction, of defeat, and of demoralization for the working class. Thus the Third International of Lenin came into being during the War, and the Fourth International comes into being in the present epoch of war and impending war.

It follows that the cadres of the new International are at first a small minority isolated in a sense from the masses, though they alone express the true interest and need of the masses, as presently becomes clear. These cadres survive in such a period because they are intransigent; because they possess clarity and sharpness in theory and ideology; because they make the clearest and sharpest break—not merely in words or even program but also organizationally from the dead and corrupt body of the old International, and because they steel themselves against every weakness in themselves and every attack and temptation from without. The example of Lenin needs merely to be cited.

To use Lenin's own words uttered during the early days of the World War, in such a period the basic task is "to unite the Marxian elements, however small their number may be at the beginning, to revive in their name the words of real Socialism now forgotten, to call the workers of all countries to relinquish chauvinism and raise the old banner of Marxism."

There are, furthermore, particular reasons why the growth of the forces of the Fourth International on American soil does not proceed at the rate of thousands a month. Right on the heels of the founding of the W. P. came the first public announcement of the Stalinist 180 degree turn, viz. support of the labor party idea. This was followed by other breath-taking swings on the Stalinist flying trapeze. Now many of the points in the present C. P. program have a superficial plausibility and attractiveness for the workers and especially for intellectuals and liberals. To welcome all people who on any ground are "opposed" to war and Fascism, who want to see peace and a semblance of democracy maintained, into one all-embracing united front—how sensible that sounds, how attractive, how imposing the masses that seem to rally to meetings and parades around such a program! It takes time and effort to demonstrate, as the W. P. attempts to do and must do if it is to be true to Marx and Lenin, true to the real facts, that this united front is a mere show, that it is pacifist and will collapse when war really threatens, as all the imposing pacifist movements always have, that this fake united front means in reality dividing the workers from each other, because it opens the way to social-patriotic betrayal in war. A similar superficial attractiveness attaches to Stalinist proposals for an all-inclusive labor party, their abandonment of the dual unionism, social-fascism, united front from below, etc. of the "Third Period." The task of showing the workers that the opportunist ditch in which the C. P. now wallows is as vile as the sectarian ditch of the earlier period is not an easy one.

But if in such a period and for such reasons as we have sketchily indicated, workers do not flock by themselves by thousands into the revolutionary party, there are compensations. Precisely the clearest elements, the most healthy and vigorous, the youth elements, penetrate beneath the surface. They see the capitulation to social-patriotism, the preparation for monstrous betrayal in the next war, the confusion and demoralization among the workers, which must result from the course of the bureaucracies of both the Second and the Third Internationals. These elements tend surely and irresistibly to move toward our program and our banner.

The past year has demonstrated that the program laid down for the W. P. in the Declaration of Principles is in every essential point unassailable. As the war issue has come to the front, the W. P. has been the one voice which has set forth a clear, a complete, a concrete Leninist position and has been able to explain events in the light of that position. Steadily this is making its impression on the genuine left currents in the Socialist Party, in Stalinist circles in some measure, and among the politically unattached who, in spite of and to some extent because of their confusion and demoralization, feel the need of some clear, albeit as yet small, voice amid the tempest.

The confidence built up among our own membership during this first year and among the most advanced workers in other groups, because on the burning, the real, issues of the revolutionary movement we speak with consistency and authority, is a great achievement.

Although this first year has necessarily been one devoted to organizing ourselves, laying foundations for the Party and its work—theoretical and organizational—the achievements in our external work have been far from negligible. In the very first weeks of its existence, the Party, through its own channels and through its support of the Non-Partisan Labor Defense, intervened decisively in the Sacramento trial, lifting that issue out of the obscurity into which the C. P. was seeking to throw it. By this and other activities our first year record in defense work was made highly creditable. The Party played a leading role in the Toledo Chevrolet and General Motors strike, which carried the struggle against the automobile barons on the one hand and the A. F. of L. bureaucrats on the other to the highest point yet achieved anywhere. In Minneapolis and the entire surrounding territory, leadership has been given in strike struggles, in organizing unions, in building the broadest and most vigorous left-progressive union movement in the country. Party members played a significant part in the conventions of automobile workers, teachers and rubber workers just preceding the Atlantic City A. F. of L. convention which opened the way for the head-on conflict between craft and industrial unionists which marked that convention and made it the most exciting and important in the entire history of the Federation. To a remarkable extent the Party has turned toward mass work and it stands out clearly as the one organization which has a trade union policy free, on the one hand, from "Third Period" sectarianism and adventurism, and on the other hand from Lovestoneite-Stalinist opportunism and conciliationism toward the trade union bureaucrats. In the unemployed field, in a difficult period of reorientation, the Party has continued to take a vital part, not least in pressing for unification on a sound basis of the two leading organizations with a mass base, the W.A.A., and the National Unemployed League.

While the Party has thus addressed itself to the concrete activities in the American labor scene, it has been internationalist in its

5th Anniversary of Spartacus Youth League

Report Shows Large Increase in Membership and Influence

By NATHAN GOULD
National Secretary, S. Y. L.

December, 1935, marks the beginning of the fifth year of the existence of the Spartacus Youth League of America and the conclusion of the first year of the post-fusion Spartacus Youth League. For those who recognize and understand the all-important role of youth in modern society and of the youth movement in the class struggle, this day is a day of exaltation. For those who have never understood its significance, it is an invitation to stop for reflection. For all, this is the occasion to review and to plan the political course and organizational strategy of the youth organization of the Workers Party.

Four years of diligent effort enables us to report the existence of a youth organization which, in the field of the class struggle, figures as a factor. The S.Y.L. has today a total of twenty-six branches functioning in fifteen cities, in ten states throughout the country.

The S.Y.L. is today approximately one-fourth the size of the Young People's Socialist League and about one-sixth the size of the Young Communist League. All other political labor youth organizations (I.W.W. youth, Anarchist youth, P.P. youth, etc.) are considerably smaller and cannot be recognized as factors influencing the youth whatever. Through our stupendous strides we have come to be acknowledged as one of the three political youth organizations active in and influencing the struggles of the toiling and student youth of this country. It is interesting to observe that our organization, in contradistinction to the above mentioned, experienced its principal growth during the last year.

Growth of S. Y. L.

While the C. I. prepared the liquidation of the Young Communist movement, and whereas the Y.P.S.L. at its last convention (Pittsburgh, July 19-21, 1935) acknowledged the loss of 29 of its branches since the time of their Reading convention one year prior to the Pittsburgh session, the Spartacus Youth League reports unprecedented progress. For the first three months after the fusion the Spartacus Youth League increased its membership by over 144 percent and increased the number of its new branches in cities where none had previously existed by 132 percent. A further increase in membership of ten percent and in new branches by 27 percent is reported for the summer months, a period of time when organizations tend to suffer normal declines in membership, in activity and in recruitment. These figures of steady and substantial growth testify to the vitality of our organization and gives indication of its great future.

S. Y. L. branches exist today in such strategic areas as the Calumet steel district and the southern Illinois coal fields, influencing there considerable numbers of youth. That the S.Y.L. is more and more becoming a factor in the struggle of the youth is best displayed not only in its active participation in the student movement and in the student strike of April 12, but more in the fact that, for example, in the past four months S.Y.L. branches in seven different cities played leading roles in strikes of the young workers.

The few organizational notes written on the occasion of the first anniversary of the post-fusion S.Y.L. are designed to give our readers an idea of our present strength and of the great potentialities of this young youth organization.

Purpose of Spartacus

The Spartacus Youth League of America is the guiding instrument of the Workers Party in the class struggles of the youth section of the proletarian population. The primary purpose of that organization

is to win and to educate for membership in the Workers Party and for leadership in the class struggle, the masses of toiling and student youth of the country. As an international organization it is prominently engaged in the work of realizing the organization of the Fourth International and the youth section of that international. In the Stockholm Youth Bureau, which our organization together with the International Communist League organizations was instrumental in founding, the S.Y.L. played an active role in the life of the Bureau and in the political struggle against the centrists and opportunists, who succeeded finally in smashing the Bureau by expelling from it the I.C.L. representative. Together with other organizations that have signed the Open Letter for the Fourth International, the S.Y.L. is now actively involved in the building of the youth section of the Fourth International and in drawing new forces to it.

The importance of the youth organization grows in correspondence with the increase of the importance of the role of youth in society. Because of the position which youth occupies in the world today it is safe to say (and it is by no means an exaggeration) that the outcome of the struggle of the working class will be determined in great measure by its (the working class) ability to win to its support the masses of toiling and student youth. In the course of the post-war period the role of youth in the various strategic positions of industry and politics has assumed an increasing importance until today they hold the very key to the four avenues which vitally concern the revolutionary movement and its course to power.

On the war front youth is the first and the most directly affected. On the economic front it is the greatest physical and moral victim. In relation to the Fascist movement it is the most likely recruit. In the field of labor politics it is the most aggressive, the most militant, and the most amenable to the propaganda of the Marxists; yet the most easily deceived by virtue of its lack of experience.

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On the Economic Front

Approximately twenty-four million, or one-fifth of the total population in the United States, are youth between the ages of 15 to 24 inclusive. At least five million of

these are today without employment. Another eight million are students. In 1930, the U. S. Department of Labor reported that no less than 11,585,808 youth between these ages were gainfully employed in the U. S.

Hence in 1930 the youth comprised over one-third of the total number of workers gainfully employed in that great period of unemployment. More important is the fact that there is probably not one single important industry in the U. S. in which the youth are not represented in ample proportion. Capitalist industrial development has seen to that. Furthermore, important industries such as automobiles, employ youth in the overwhelming majority because of the nature of the work and the immense speed-up.

It is not difficult to understand therefore that the importance of the youth in the productive apparatus of the country is enormous, and considered from the point of view of the class struggle and proletarian victory, they are indispensable to the proletarian vanguard. This steady relative increase of youth in industry at the expense of the older worker is to be attributed to the simplification of machinery in production, the rationalization in production (Taylorism) which requires nimble fingers, young and active bodies, with great stores of quick energy; also the fact that youth ostensibly requires less to live on (that is, from the point of view of direct family obligations, although many times he is actually the sole supporter of large families) enabling him to work at a lower wage return. Because of these factors we find that in the past fifteen or so years youth has become more and more of a factor in basic industry to the extent where he has become a vital factor to the operation of production. Just as youth, counting in the millions, is indispensable to the productive apparatus of the country, so he is vital to the victory of that progressive force in society which, by the nature of its struggle, must rely upon and seek support from the factory proletariat. The task of winning the younger members of this class falls directly upon the shoulders of the Spartacus Youth League.

While it cannot be stated with any amount of accuracy that the degree of exploitation (from the point of view of speed-up and general working conditions in the factory) is not any worse for the youth than for the adult, it is a known fact that, as a rule, their wages are lower than that of the adult and that they are given (be-

cause speed is the primary skill requirement in modern society) the more strenuous jobs and that they are being constantly cheated and discriminated against through the application of so-called apprentice laws, etc.

Write Your Own Comment!

Does the support of League of Nations sanctions lead to support of the new imperialist war? A British Stalinist spokesman, T. A. Jackson, gives a clear-cut answer (see Plebs, Nov. 1935):

"The issue which is being decided now in relation to the Italo-Abyssinian war is whether the League of Nations is of any use as an instrument for the prevention (immediate or ultimate) of war. To put this issue to the test involves punitive measures, up to and including (if necessary) war upon the war-maker. There is no other way of testing the issue decisively."

"Would a war between the League states and Fascist Italy (with any allies Italy could collect) be worth while from the point of view of the INTERNATIONAL working class? Of course it would. A defeat of Fascism in Italy would be a defeat of Fascism EVERYWHERE. A defeat of imperialism in the person of Italy would be a defeat for imperialism everywhere, including Britain and France."

Here we have Stalinist social-imperialism in the guise of the struggle against Fascism and imperialism!

And the same author finds that the League of Nations can be converted into an anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist force!

It is, potentially, at least as much an ANTI-imperialist (and therefore, potentially, ANTI-capitalist) institution as the reverse." (Same as above.)

Write your own comment!

Unemployed Youth

At the present time youth represents almost one-half of the total unemployed of the country. Most of these are youth who have been graduated from high schools and colleges and have been denied by this system the right to participate in production. Such individuals properly enter into a category all their own—"declassed" elements. Never having worked, they lack experience in and a basic knowledge of the class struggle and its inevitable implications. Because of an absence of this fundamental class tradition, functioning under the unbearable economic conditions imposed on them, they more easily degenerate (politically) and are compelled to resort to other ("illegal") means in order to live.

It is not surprising that Dr. Williams of the Psychiatric Clinic of Childrens Village, Dobbs Ferry, New York, can report a tremendous increase in crime in the depression years among the youth between the ages of 18 and 21, most of whom have had no previous record; that these "depression youth" are today the greatest offenders of the law. Wandering and begging, living as "moochers," is the most dignified expression of the demoralization imposed upon the youth. America's

contribution to the institutions of crime and degeneration, the pool hall, profit considerably from increased attendance by the youth who frequent these institutions for lack of a better means of disposing of the long hours of tortured thought. A process of moral and physical degeneration of the youth, "the future of the country," as we say, takes place and is taking place at a rate unbelievable. Hundreds of thousands of youth wandering, listless and apathetic; restless, stealing, begging, degenerating, rendered useless by a system that cannot care for them, they become the victims of that society.

This multitude of "depression youth" (ex-students who have been denied a place in the productive apparatus of the country) will tomorrow, unless reached and educated by the proletarian movement, constitute the Fascist army of this country. That is the lesson of the development of the Fascist movement of every other country. American capitalism is producing today by this very economic process a huge reservoir from which will spring tomorrow a comensurable Fascist army. We for our part can and must direct the gross dissatisfaction of these youth into the proper channels, the channels of proletarian revolution, as the only means by which the needs of these youth can be satisfied for all time. Let it be known to all that the Spartacus Youth League is the instrument of the working class designated to execute this vital and historic task.

(To be concluded next week)

THE NEW STRUGGLE IN AUTOS

Big Test Awaits Industrial Union Movement

(Special to the New Militant)
By A. J. MUSTE

DETROIT, Mich.—On every side signs multiply suggesting that before this winter is over the battle for unionization of the automobile industry will come to a head. The condition of the industry, the developments among the independent unions in the industry; the Green-Lewis controversy in the A. F. of L. over craft versus industrial unionism, and the strikes that have already broken out or are about to explode, all point in this direction. It is hard to see how a gigantic conflict can be avoided. The automobile magnates' nervousness is reflected in all the newspapers in the automobile centers of Michigan, Ohio and adjoining states.

The strike of nearly 4,000 workers in the Motor Products Co. in Detroit is holding firm. It is a preliminary skirmish in which the forces that will presently be cooperating or fighting on a grand scale are feeling each other out. The strike was called by the Automobile Industrial Workers Association (the "Coughlin" union) mainly composed of production workers, but the Mechanics Educational Society of America (composed mainly

of tool and die makers though its last convention decided for industrial organization) which also had members working in the plant immediately called out its men and gave the strike complete support. The strike also has the support of the Associated Automobile Workers of America (known as the "Greer" union after its leader). As the NEW MILITANT reported recently, the executives of these three independent unions in the auto field have voted for amalgamation into an industrial union with a preamble recognizing the existence of class struggle. The referendum vote of the membership on the proposal will be almost unanimously favorable.

The Motor Products strike is thus the first test of the new amalgamation of auto unions. If it succeeds, as seems fairly certain, the new union will become a very potent rallying center. The reactionary wing of the A. F. of L., headed in the automobile industry by Francis Dillon who gained unsavory fame for his collaboration with the bosses in the great General Motors strike last spring and was rewarded by Bill Green last August by being made president over the protests of the delegates of the A. F. of L. international, the United Automobile Workers, has behaved in characteristic fashion and has succeeded in finally discrediting itself in the eyes of the Detroit workers. Dillon tried to play an open scab-herding role. He stated publicly that he would confer with the management and "take the Motors Products workers back to their job at once."

The strikers met the Dillon blast with two masterful strokes. First, they challenged Dillon to support an election under Federal auspices to determine which union represents the majority of the men. Dillon cannot run this chance. The firm will also oppose it as long as possible, because to allow an election means recognition of the Wagner Board and recognition of the independent union!

In the next place the strike leaders are inviting Dillon's union to join the strike committee, helping them to win the battle and telling him that they are willing in such case to have him take all the credit he wants for the victory!

Dillon will of course not cooperate with the "outlaws" and the chance that he will be able to do any damage to the strike is now practically nil.

It can be authoritatively stated that from both sides leaders of the M.E.S.A. and the A.I.W.A., and the John L. Lewis Committee for Industrial Unionism have been making exploratory moves to determine whether cooperation is possible. Here is the key to the situation so far as the workers' side of the struggle is concerned.

The auto workers, especially in Detroit, have unquestionably lost faith in the A. F. of L. which they identify with Dillon and his predecessor, Collins. This outfit cannot organize the industry. The opportunity will pass this year, perhaps for several years, if it is left to them. On the other hand, the workers are not likely to have the confidence that any combination of independents can achieve the huge task, especially as long as an unsympathetic, reactionary A. F. of L. union remains in the field to keep the men divided and to receive the bosses' support as soon as the independents really threaten the latter. The independents need the support of the John L. Lewis "progressives" to smash the Green-Dillon leadership from inside the A. F. of L. Then the basis will be laid for a genuine industrial union within the A. F. of L. which can include the present independents. There are reasons to believe that the more far-sighted leaders among the independents have just such a perspective.

Thus the prospects for a sound foundation for building a union are better than ever. The workers are astir, furthermore, and here and there strikes are breaking out earlier than in other seasons, making it more likely that enough impetus for an extensive struggle will be attained before the season passes its peak. The condition of the industry itself is also favorable for an organization campaign and strike action.

General Motors Nervous

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The companies are thus caught in a dilemma. If e.g. a plant producing even a minor part of a car is shut down, the production line in one of the big companies may be slowed down in a few days which means losing orders. The same drive of competition is leading companies to seek means of cutting down costs, which means that in the face of rising prices grievances accumulate among the workers. Thus the Motor Products Corporation strike started over an attempt of the company to put over a wage cut under the cover of a shift from piece to week work. General Motors is laying up trouble for itself, in its move to decentralize its transmission production, so that it may not be caught again as it was by the Toledo strike last year, by working the men in Muncie, Ind., and Saginaw, Mich. 25 percent longer hours and at corresponding lower pay than the reduced force still working in Toledo. Little wonder the big companies exhibit symptoms of extreme nervousness!

Militants and progressives must not let this opportunity pass. They must make full use of it. In a real sense the fate of the American labor movement for a long time to come may hinge upon what happens in the auto industry between now and May of next year. Militants and progressives in meeting this challenge and opportunity will:

Program for Militants

1. Promote the amalgamation movement among the independent auto unions.
2. Fight to smash the Green-Dillon leadership in the A. F. of L. auto union once and for all.
3. Demand that the Lewis-Hillman "progressives" prove that they mean business by fighting Dillon, supporting strikes, whether of A. F. of L. or independent unions, and undertaking to unite all forces in the industry and in the labor movement for a large-scale organizing campaign to start immediately.
4. Support joint action of all elements in any organizing work and strikes now going on.
5. Aim at the creation in this production season of a powerful industrial union in automobiles with an autonomous international charter from the A. F. of L. and democratically controlled by its own membership. Even if the Green-Wolf forces block the movement and force postponement of a decision until the next A. F. of L. convention, this must not prevent cooperation of all forces in organizing and strike activity pending final determination of the A. F. of L. attitude.