

N. W. Union Progressives Condemn Union Splitting Moves of Stalinists

By Carlos Hudson

MINNEAPOLIS, Sept. 11. Two weeks ago, the Stalinist leadership of the three Machinists' locals in Minneapolis and Hopkins—Nos. 382, 1037, and 1313—induced the membership to vote to withdraw from the International Association of Machinists and join the CIO. So that militants in the American labor movement may understand the background of this move, and why it has been condemned by the progressive forces in the trade unions of the Northwest, we present here a brief story of the case.

The Auto Mechanics Local 383 received its charter in 1927 when the trade union movement in Minneapolis as well as throughout the United States was at its lowest point. For six years, up to 1933, this unit remained almost inactive, never having more than 60 members. Like many another local union, it received a powerful stimulus from the smashing victories of the General Drivers Local in 1934. Its membership grew with amazing speed.

Win Strikes

On midnight, January 3, 1935, a joint Twin Cities strike of auto mechanics was called. Officials of the Minneapolis General Drivers Union placed themselves at the disposal of the strikers, and functioned actively on the picket lines and in the strike headquarters of both Minneapolis and St. Paul. The strike was settled in about two weeks and resulted in a victory which gave the unions a firm foothold in their industry.

In 1934, the Machinists International had chartered Local 1313 in Minneapolis, with jurisdiction over the ornamental iron industry. In the summer of 1935 a strike was called in this industry. On the morning of July 26, Farmer-Labor Mayor Latimer appeared at the struck Flour City plant with a squad of 68 police and escorted 30 strike-breakers into the plant through a small and surprised picket line. The General Drivers Union mobilized a picket squad during the day, gave the scabs a stormy reception, and the strike was revived with a bang. Late in September, a strike settlement gave the union most of its demands.

All Inclusive

In 1936 a charter was issued to the machinists in Hopkins, a Minneapolis suburb, and this union has about 700 members, chiefly through organization of the Moline plant in that community.

The three Machinists unions, with a membership of about 6,000, constitute the stronghold of the Stalinists in Minneapolis, being the one section of the movement in which they enjoy leadership.

Because a very small progressive fraction in the Machinists had fought for such a set-up, the Minneapolis machinists under the International Association of Machinists charter enjoyed the finest organizational set-up of machinists anywhere in the country. Last spring, the I. A. M., authorized the local machinists to take in outside crafts—molders, iron workers, sheet metal workers, etc.—so that to all intents, in fact if not in name, the Minneapolis machinists had an all-inclusive metal workers industrial union. The progressive labor movement here has protected them from the unhealthy jurisdictional disputes

that curse the movement elsewhere.

Stalinist Tricksters

Yet here, as in every union where they have power, the Stalinists have used that power to abuse, mislead, and cheat the union membership. Hilliard Smith, a Stalinist organizer, for many months has spent all his time, while on the union payroll, at playing with reform politics and People's Front maneuvers. Mauseth, another Stalinist leader, has time and again made unnecessary compromises with the bosses. For instance: in case after case, where Joe Pease, a machinist business agent and a progressive, has made a good settlement of some grievance, Mauseth will go to the arbitrator and accept a settlement on much worse terms.

The Stalinist regime has been criminally wasteful of the union's funds, in a way that any informed trade unionists anywhere in the country can readily understand. When Mauseth took over the leadership, the union had \$15,000. Mauseth put a squad of his henchmen on the union payroll, bought cars out of union funds for Communist Party leaders from New York, etc.

Ill-Advised Sympathy Strike

In August of this year, an ill-advised and ill-organized auto salesmen's strike was called in the Twin Cities. Following out their People's Front line of kowtowing to the white collar workers, the Stalinists took the auto mechanics out on a sympathetic strike. Now this in itself was not wrong, but the method of going about it was decidedly wrong. The machinists had hundreds of grievances against the industry's bosses (who are very well organized). The logical thing to do was to fight for a settlement of these grievances. This was not done. Subsequently, the bosses organized company unions to supplant the unions of the auto salesmen, and that strike was lost. The machinists went back to work in a month, without a thing to show for their sacrifice.

If the Stalinist leadership was rotten to the core, the Grand Lodge officials of the I. A. M. were not far behind. By threatening to break up the machinist set-up here along craft lines, by red-baiting and lack of decisiveness, the Machinist International furnished the unscrupulous leaders of the Minneapolis machinists with just the excuse they were seeking. In the last week in August the Stalinists, by talking of lower dues, by appealing to the sentiment of the members for unity which they had already achieved, took the unions into the CIO.

Fought by Progressives

The progressive forces, gathered around the Northwest Organizer, immediately pointed out that, of all the mistakes made by the irresponsible Stalinist leadership, this mistake is the one fraught with the gravest dangers to the very existence of the Machinists' organization. The truth is that not one honest and practical reason can be advanced for taking the machinists over to the CIO at this time.

Agreements Endangered

The machinists had signed Agreements with the bosses, agreements made under the A. F. of L. The progressives pointed

out that the move to the CIO will give the bosses the excuse for a renewed fight on the union. Already, this is being borne out.

By going CIO now, the auto mechanics and machinists isolate themselves from their machinist brothers internationally. By going CIO, the machinists do not improve their organizational set-up—they face a much poorer set-up under the CIO. At present they are chartered in the Radio & Electrical Workers. But it is known that the Steel Workers Organization Committee and the United Auto Workers, at the very least, are going to claim jurisdiction over some of the former members of the I.A.M. machinists in Minneapolis.

"By going CIO in this manner and at this time", the progressives pointed out, "the machinists make it possible for certain reactionary International officials to compel local unions to withhold support from them, support which has not and could not be denied if a truly responsible trade union policy were carried out."

Move Lacks Basis

And what possible point can the CIO have in taking in the machinists of Minneapolis? Every progressive unionist supports the campaign to organize the unorganized of America. But that is hardly the question in this territory. The A. F. of L., because here it is led by progressives, has already organized such an overwhelming majority of the workers in Minneapolis that this city is acknowledged by the U. S. Labor Department to be the best organized city in the United States. Organizing the unorganized is one question. Raiding the A. F. of L. in this situation is another question. By taking in the machinists, the CIO will only serve to confuse and disrupt the local labor movement. The progressives stated that "the interests of neither the workers in the A. F. of L. nor in the CIO can possibly be served by such a blundering, irresponsible move."

What's Behind the Move,

The real reason for this shift to the CIO is that it is a job-saving device on the part of the Stalinist leadership of the machinists' union. It is more than this. It is an attempt to maneuver into a position where these union mis-leaders can attack the progressive unions in Minneapolis. That is the SOLE reason for the move.

The Stalinists are throwing everything they have in the unions in this section—the leadership of the machinists—into the pot, in a desperate attempt to reach the position where they can attack the rest of the labor movement and label all other unions as reactionary, etc. The growing strength in the Northwest of what Stalinists term "Trotskyism" is forcing the unprincipled C. P. into such criminal moves that jeopardize the magnificent forward march of labor in Minneapolis.

Leaders Recognize Seriousness

Those in the leadership of the national trade union movement realize the significance of the present situation in Minneapolis. In an unprecedented move, the entire Executive Board of the I. A. M., led by Wharton, is moving into Minneapolis and, beginning Sept. 13, will hold a hearing on the local situation.

The CIO has ordered John Brophy here immediately. Whereas in Minnesota, almost the entire CIO staff is made up of Stalinists, who blessed the machinist

Reading Old Guard Joins In Fight Against "Trotskyism"

All the attacks made on the "Trotskyists" by Thomas-Altman-Tyler are poor imitations of the arguments of their former comrades, their political brothers and future leaders, the Old Guard. Not only the "democratic" arguments but also the "democratic" acts follow the same pattern right down to the use of the "democratic" cops against the Left wing.

We shall not delve into the democratic methods of "Honest" Jasper McLevy, head of the Social-Democratic Federation and mayor of Bridgeport. Strike-breaking has an odor all its own and when combined with democratic sewer socialism, it is a bit too much. Maybe after he has been sprayed with the "fellowship of freemen" and whitewashed editorially by Gus Tyler, he'll be ready for inclusion in the all (exclusive of revolutionists) inclusive party.

Instead, as an example of genuine, home grown American democratic socialism I give you, the Hoopes-Stump gang of Reading, Pa. They are forever intoning praise of "democracy" and rejecting "the language and tactics of force, violence, seizure of power, illegality and meddling of some attitudes towards trades unions." A look at their record will be instructive.

Old Guard "Democracy"

Just over a year ago the Reading Old Guard "democratically" took over the Pennsylvania State Convention of the S. P. by the simple democratic method of making themselves the credentials committee, rejecting sufficient "undemocratic" delegates to secure a majority and then calling the "convention" together and proceeding to "organize" it. It might be worth recording that they also "democratically" chartered new branches the night before the convention met and elected additional delegates as a sort of reserve army of democracy in case of need.

The democratic victory won by the above means was just a beginning. On returning to Reading they found an obstacle or two still in their path. The records of the local party were still in the hands of members loyal to the S.P. and these members together with the YPSL seemed to think that they had a right to use the Labor Lyceum (S. P. Hall) for which they had sacrificed time and money. A new democratic call went forth from that citadel of democracy, the Socialist Town Hall of Reading, "Calling all cops, calling all cops, a robbery is being committed at the S. P. headquarters. The robbers may need protection. That is all."

And under cover of the democratic protection of the police, the democratic Old Guard took over the records of Local Berks County.

move, there is plenty of evidence that such is not the attitude of Lewis, Brophy and the responsible heads of the CIO.

Call for Reconsiderations

Progressives of Minneapolis are calling upon the membership of the machinists locally to reconsider their action of voting CIO. They are demanding of the International Machinists that it guarantee that the Minneapolis machinists will continue as in the recent past as a united all-inclusive metal trades union.

Next week's article will bring the latest news of the machinists situation, and will point out what the Stalinists hoped to gain in the Minnesota F-L Party by their attempted coup.

ty of the S.P. At the same time, in sweet, dulcet and "democratic" tones for which cops are famed, the YPSL was ordered not only out of their Labor Lyceum but "out of the vicinity."

Old Guard vs. Trotskyism

The Old Guard in Berks County is strong against Trotskyism. In that graveyard gazette, the Reading Advocate, one of those dull gray sheets that are the curse of the labor movement, the editor, Hofses, for a change dropped his scissors and put his pen and imagination to work on an article on the "Crisis in the S.P."

Editor Hofses charged that the Trotskyists were responsible not only for the present split in the S. P. but also for the split in Reading in 1936. On the other hand, his democratic co-worker, George Rhodes, will inform anyone who asks that Charlie Sands alone is responsible for the Reading split, and God knows that Sands is no Trotskyist. Hofses and Rhodes should get together on one story, otherwise historians will have difficulty in determining what motivated our democratic heroes. Certainly the motives were of the highest. These gentlemen are always moved by the "highest" motives. Any numbers racketeer in Reading can testify to that.

Primary Fight

At the present moment the S. P. in Reading is engaged in a bitter fight in the Socialist primaries with the Old Guard. The latter have the advantages which go with control of several hundred city jobs. They have a weekly paper and a monthly sheet which is given away free. They have weekly picnics and mass meetings at Socialist Park. Their candidates are in the main more widely known. The importance of a strong campaign against such a well entrenched and corrupt machine is obvious.

Yet not one line in support of Local Berks has appeared in the Socialist Call and not one finger has been moved in support by the N. E. C. Granted the hopefuls bankruptcy and inefficiency of the N. E. C., I still think the criminal neglect has a deeper basis. The political agreement of the N. E. C., certainly of its dominant Thomas, Altman, Wisconsin wing, with the Reading Old Guard is evident. Its two major actions during the primary campaign (1) the expulsion drive against Trotskyists (2) the support of La Guardia, have both played into the hands of the Old Guard and constituted a stab in the back to the S. P. in Reading.

There is no room in Reading for two "Socialist" democratic parties. The Old Guard has the inside track for reformism and for deals with "progressive" Republicans or Democrats. For the present Local of the S. P. there are but two roads, backward to disintegration and decay with the La Guardia Socialists, eventually ending by entering the Old Guard, or forward with the Left wing to Revolutionary Socialism.

NOTICE TO PARTY BRANCHES

Please send in names of comrades elected to serve as correspondents to the SOCIALIST APPEAL. Special attention must be given to providing us with timely stories on trade union struggles. All copy must be in by Saturday.