

Opposition Fights Fur Union Bureaucracy

With the expiration of the present agreement at the end of this year, the furriers will face a serious situation. The future of the Furriers Union and the nature of the new agreement is to a large extent dependent upon the attitude and policy of the Stalinist administration. To retain and improve the working conditions in the Fur Industry the furriers must abandon the present opportunist and class-collaborationist line of the Communist Party.

The Fur Manufacturing Association with whom the furriers will deal is the sole boss-organization in the trade. The Association has become powerful and threatening not without the assistance of the union bureaucracy. The method of the Stalinists in dealing with the Association was even more harmful to the union than that of the right wing leaders who preceded them. Three years of Stalinist control of the United Furriers Union is marked by regular concessions of a most disastrous kind to the bosses. So serious have been these concessions that the Furriers Union may have to reenforce their table conversations with the Association by declaring a General Strike.

Elementary Demands Ignored

During the period when the present agreement was negotiated the furriers demonstrated the highest militancy and morale. Nevertheless the communist representatives of the union failed to insist upon many elementary demands for which the furriers have strived to gain many years. They willingly agreed to requests made of them by the Association but did not fight for the just and burning needs of the workers.

The bosses, on their side were well satisfied with the agreement. A most criminal concession was made to the bosses when the union agreed verbally to help smashed the small association and independent shops, forcing them to join the Big Association. At the time of the signing of the agreement two years ago, two Fur Associations existed in the industry. The first was the Fur Manufacturing Association which embraced the large coat houses. The second was the Trimming Association. Aside from these there were several independent shops. A struggle of the two associations raged for many years.

When the Stalinists, coming to the aid of the large association, forced the smaller one to dissolve, all of its members entered the larger body for protection. The system used to bring the trimmers and independent shops into the association was as follows:

The settlement made by the union with the Fur Manufacturing Assn. was the only recognized collective pact in the trade. An agreement was not signed with the Trimmers Assn. Instead the furriers signed with individual trimming shops only. This enabled the union to exercise direct control over each trimming and independent shop but not for long!

According to the terms of the Fur Manufacturing Assn. contract, any dispute that arises is settled by an "impartial chairman". This Chairman is invariably to be found acting for the bosses. Further—a business agent of the union is forbidden to visit any shop to investigate complaints without being accompan-

ied by an Association representative. Strikes are ruled illegal.

Heavy Price Paid

These outrageous conditions did not apply to the trimming and independent shops. The rights of the workers there were better preserved. But as the pressure of the union against these shops increased they rushed into the Association. The most active furriers were then carefully removed from their jobs. The most active furriers were then carefully removed from their jobs. This disgraceful state of affairs, made possible by the Stalinist-boss "victory agreement", was the price paid by the workers.

It would seem that enough damage had already been done. But there is no limit for the Stalinists. It is clearly stipulated in the agreement that there shall be no overtime, no contracting, no floor boy is to do productive work and only one employer is permitted to work in a shop. It was imperative that workers committees were organized and empowered to enforce these regulations. The administration instead commissioned this work to the Impartial Chairman. As a result active workers were dismissed, speed-up flourishes, overtime is widespread and floor boys do the work of the regular furriers, slowly replacing them. The disgust of the furriers with all this was not slow in appearing.

The first expression of protest against the administration was shown in the last elections and also in the voting on the 1937 tax.

Democracy Flouted

As is the custom, the furriers hold their election of officers every year. The administration, which is dominated by the Communists, conducts 100% bureaucratic elections. Even the most reactionary unions can learn from them. At the local meetings, the Stalinists impose election objection committees of their own choosing. Before the election objection committee, meets they already announce when the delegates should appear. Thus, the whole election is carried through in one week's time. The opposition is not even allowed to come near the objection committee. Nor is the opposition allowed any watchers at the polls. And this is what they call "100% democracy"! As a result of this system, the administration was caught red-handed stealing votes from the opposition in the last elections. Regardless of the fact that the opposition did not have sufficient time and forces to conduct an effective campaign, and though the elections were exclusively under the control of the Stalinists, the opposition nevertheless polled 2,000 out of the 6,000 votes cast.

That this is a heavy blow at the administration, is known to every furrier. The administration also suffered a defeat when one of their nominees for business agent was defeated by an independent candidate. The defeated Stalinist later proved to be a racketeer, extorting money from workers, and as such he had to be expelled both from the Communist Party and from the union only after repeated rank and file demands and in order that the C. P. might save face.

The second defeat of the Stalinist administration was suffered at the last local meetings, where the furriers were supposed to

Browder: 'One of my best friends....'

ONE OF MY
BEST FRIENDS
IS A JEW!



vote on the 1937 tax. At the meetings of the Board of Directors and of the Joint Council, a tax of \$25 was decided upon. Knowing that the figure was a high one, it was decided to appear before the rank and file without a specific recommendation on the sum, but only for a "substantial tax". But in the fur market, it was already known that the \$25 had been decided on by the administration, and the furriers came to their meetings for the purpose of voting down the recommendation.

Heavy Tax Voted Down

The Stalinists and their administration have always boasted claimed that the majority of the furriers stand with them, and that everything they do or say is with the approval of the ranks. To prove that the fur workers are with the administration, a letter was sent out to the membership, in which they were warned that unless they appeared at the local meetings, they would each be fined \$1. Such a warning would hardly be necessary if the prestige of the leadership was what they claimed it was. They had to send out such letter because the local meetings, which are held every three or four months, instead of the monthly meetings provided for by the union constitution, are not attended by the members.

The administration believed that if the thousands of furriers would show up at the meetings, it would be able to push through any proposal. How surprised they were when the furriers voted down the \$25 tax! Not even Gold, who, relying on his past popularity, was brought down to swing the vote, succeeded in accomplishing his aim. Here it should be explained that the furriers did not vote down the tax because they do not believe in a strong union, or because they failed to realize the seriousness of the situation, but because they regarded the \$25 tax as too high a sum under present conditions in the trade. Secondly, the furriers argued, what has happened to the money collected in the

past two taxes? Since the unification, the furriers have experienced their third tax. Also, the furriers contended, the administration did not have the right to spend the money collected in previous taxes for the special strike fund, which was used for other purposes. They therefore voted for a one day's pay tax, roughly equivalent to \$10. According to the financial report, there is only \$119,000 on hand. The rest of the money was spent to pay the back wages of the former Joint Council officials, for lawyers, and for other purposes of which the furriers know nothing.

As to democracy, our union is not behind-hand. Those acquainted with the "democratic" practices of the Communist Party, especially after the events in the Soviet Union, can understand the kind of "democracy" we have in the Fur Workers Union. The official organs published by the union are the exclusive monopoly of the Stalinists, who systematically exclude any writings by those having different opinions. More than that, the official organs are used to slander any and all opponents and critics. As on the

political field, so in the trade unions, the Stalinists cannot brook the slightest criticism. It is true, they do not yet put oppositionists to the wall, as they have been doing in the Stalinist paradise.

Opposition Group Continues

Yet, the opposition is continuing its activity. The opposition does not yet number hundreds, to be sure; the reason being that many furriers, no matter how strongly they oppose the administration, fear to come out in open conflict against it. Although composed entirely of rank and file workers, and without any prominent leading personalities, the opposition has made sufficient progress to compel the bureaucracy to begin discriminating against critical spokesmen at the local meetings, by refusing them the floor.

As to how the opposition conducts its activity, its relationship to the Stalinists and other elements in the union, and the question of its job in the coming period,—these will be dealt with in coming issues of the Appeal.

New Headquarters in Chicago

The left wing of the Socialist Party of Chicago and Cook County announces the opening of headquarters in Room 504, 189 North Clark Street (telephone: Deaborn 7562), together with the Chicago District Young Peoples Socialist League office. A bookshop with radical and revolutionary publications from all over the world is maintained in conjunction with the office. Workers are invited to drop in, read and discuss.

The following calendar of events for the next period is herewith announced:

Sunday, October 10, 3 P. M. Corinthian Hall, a Capitol Building, 159 N. State: Erber, Gould, Glotzer speak on "Youth and the Workers Face New War". Admission 15c.

Sunday, October 10, 8 P. M. Cafe Idrott, membership meeting, party and YPSL members only.

Saturday, October 16, 8 P. M. Housewarming and coming-out Party, Cafe Idrott. 3206 N. Wilton Ave. Admission, 25c in advance; 35c at door.

Sunday, October 17, 3 P. M. Cafe Idrott. 3206 N. Wilton, Glotzer speaks on the Sino-Japanese War. Admission 15c.

Saturday, October 30, 8 P. M. Cafe Idrott, Halloween Dance and Carnival. Admission 35c.

Sunday, November 7, 8 P. M. Celebration of 20th Anniversary of the Russian Revolution. Cafe Idrott. Admission 50c.

Wednesday, November 24, 8 P. M. Welcome Dance for Delegates to National Left-wing Convention. Cafe Idrott.