

Left Wing Socialist Calls for Militancy at Ohio W.A.A. Confab

AKRON.—A year of Stalinist rule and ruin revealed its balance sheet at the third annual convention of the Ohio Workers Alliance, at the Akron Y.W.C.A., October 23-24.

Within one year, the financial report of the organization revealed, the Ohio Workers Alliance, until six months ago the largest organization of unemployed outside of New York City, has been reduced to less than 900 dues-paying members in September.

Though ninety percent of the 81 official delegates present (a miserable numerical representation in comparison with previous conventions) were Stalinists or Stalinized sympathizers, Herbert Benjamin, of the C.P. Central Committee, Arnold Johnson, embittered renegade from revolutionary socialism, Ben Gray, C.P. president of the O.W.A., and their lesser satellites, suffered from a violent attack of the jitters, carrying through the most comically complex and bureaucratic maneuvers to prevent the voice of the one revolutionary socialist present, Art Preis of Toledo, from being heard.

Why They Were Afraid

But they had reason to be afraid. They had had trouble whipping into line a rank-and-file revolt of their own delegates, who wanted as officers of the organization members from the ranks who had actually worked to build the organization and had met with some success in Summit County (Akron). Several leading C.P. members of the Barberton local, Summit County, with second largest voting strength at the convention, privately confessed to this observer that, they had been literally blackmailed into supporting the Stalinist bureaucratic, class-collaborationist line by fear that the Stalinists would wreck their organization, which represents years of hard, earnest work. These workers were fearful of personal reprisals through the usual methods of personal slander and causing them to lose their jobs. In this fashion, the vile methods of the G.P.U. are being spread into every workers' organization. These rank-and-file workers, recent converts to Stalinism but still fundamentally honest, resent the fact that while they do all the work and try to build the organization, pie-card artists and paid "machine" men like Ben Gray and Arnold Johnson are given all the influential and desirable posts. The Stalinist higher-ups are so fearful of their political line that they are increasingly rejecting all except the most corrupt and venal functionaries.

Real Voting Strength Analyzed

An analysis of the voting strength at the convention is revealing. Lucas County (Toledo) had almost 16,000 votes, based on yearly dues-stamp purchases. This was for the year during which Art Preis, a "Trotskyite," was chairman. 8000 of these votes resided in the Downtown Branch, Toledo, of which Preis is chairman. This one branch represented about twenty percent of the total voting strength at the convention! Summit County (Akron) had 12,000 votes, almost 3,000 in

the branch of the little town of Barberton. Cuyahoga County (Cleveland) had 7,500 votes approximately, or a total for the entire county less than either of the two aforementioned individual branches. It was revealed that a block of 1,000 stamps was purchased by the Cleveland Stalinists just before the voting strength was assigned. Cleveland is where the demon organizers and functionaries, Arnold Johnson and Ben Gray, draw down their pay. It has a population respectively five and seven times greater than Toledo and Akron.

Almost the entire first day's sessions were filled by lengthy two-hour reports and speeches by Ben Gray and Herbert Benjamin. Here was all the "We greet enthusiastically Roosevelt's Chicago speech," "Our Government," "Our Congressmen," "The People," "Peace-loving nations against war-loving nations," etc.... Not one word about militancy, class-consciousness, class-struggle, independent working class political action, the principles upon which the W.A.A. was funded.

Debate on any question was limited to five minutes per delegate, with opportunity to speak again only when no other delegate wanted the floor.

All voting was to be by "aye" and "no", or a show of hands of the delegates present, except when twenty percent of the delegates present voted for a roll-call. Twenty-one delegates from Cuyahoga County represented less real votes and membership than the two delegates from the Toledo Downtown Branch!

A motion was passed preventing additional nominations from the floor! The chair ruled that no resolution, not previously approved by the Resolutions Committee, could be read before the delegates except by a two-thirds vote of the convention!

Plan Administration Deal

The most significant remark by Herbert Benjamin was a statement that the Workers Alliance must become a "responsible" organization that would command the "respect of the public", because the organization's heads were working for a written agreement with the W. P. A. This points the way to the coming sell-out of the organized unemployed to the administration.

Preis finally secured the floor for a brief five minutes and exposed the use of the terms "responsible" and "respectable" as being terms used by the capitalist class and boss press to designate the weak and sell-out type of leadership which the capitalists could effectively use to stifle militant organization.

Preis Well Received

Despite all the attempts to slander and physically isolate him, Preis' words were greeted with a real round of applause. Benjamin hastily took the platform and for a half-hour tried with weasel words to undermine the effect of Preis' five minute talk.

Fearful of precipitating any discussion, the Stalinist resolution committee first brought in a resolution calling for a boy-

cott of Japan by the labor organizations, significantly leaving out their real line of calling on the American imperialist government to apply sanctions and a boycott.

Preis again secured the floor and pointed out the difference between working-class sanctions and imperialist sanctions. Although the latter was not included in the resolution, immediately a dozen Stalinists took the floor and began arguing in favor of imperialist sanctions.

Here again, surprisingly, delegates, rank-and-file independents, supported the revolutionary position. A bureaucratic motion to close debate was shoved over quickly.

Fur Militants Unite Against C.P. Leaders

To the outside, world the Stalinists proclaim that a genuine united front exists today in the Furriers union. Those familiar with the actual situation know that this characterization is a bluff. True, they have managed to win over some right wing officials whom they promised jobs and put on their slates. It was these same right wing officials who, during the bloody period, were very often the object of the well-known "Spit-brigade" the dainty girls who spit in unison on all those who would not succumb to the bureaucratic Stalinist rule. These right wing boys were then subject to the vilest insults, called scabs, racketeers, and gangsters. Today, when they fall in line and obey their drivers, the Stalinist fakers call them "honest, constructive and sincere socialists"!

These right wingers capitulated, many fur workers remained passive. But there is still a fine number of the rank and file who carry on the fight against the Stalinist bureaucracy and for better conditions for the fur workers.

The opposition in the Furriers Union is a unity of all elements who are against Stalinist control, class collaboration, Peoples Frontism, and union bureaucracy, which the Stalinists carry through in order to betray the workers. One can imagine what it means to be an opposition in a Union where the Stalinists have complete control.

The opposition has great financial difficulties; it is, therefore, very hard for it to carry through a strong campaign. The opposition is a strong one. The fact is that in the last elections, the Stalinist vote-counters themselves gave 2000 votes to an opposition candidate.

The important thing is that in the leadership of the Opposition there are no prominent leaders, and yet the plain rank and filers who cannot swallow the Stalinist traitors, are ready to sacrifice themselves and fight to the end.

The Resolutions Committee then brought forth a one-line resolution to accept the state officers report. Preis again took the floor. He was repeatedly stopped by the chair and other Stalinists on points of order. Preis refused to yield the floor and forced the Stalinists to permit him to finish. Preis showed how the reactionaries and imperialists were behind the program advocated by the Stalinists, as proposed in this report; and, further, demanded an explanation for the concealing in the report of the true condition of the organization. The Stalinists did not attempt to answer these questions.

Ruth Fredricks, of Wood County, an independent Socialist and Dorothy Meagley, a "Clarity-ite," and also a Toledo Downtown Branch delegate, collaborated with Preis throughout the convention. This was done in the face of the threat that if they were seen even talking to Preis, they would be physically isolated from the rest of the delegates. It was these two workers who blocked an attempt in the Constitution Committee to write in a clause empowering the state president to reorganize on his own discretion any local of the organization.

Bill's Column

The Last Straw

The tottering Mahoney campaign was finally given the kiss of death by the endorsement of Matthew Woll.

How to Win Friends and Influence People

Japanese style: Bomb them, shoot them, starve them... result—they love you. And you collect their customs taxes.

Roosevelt style: Feed them alphabet soup with all the possible permutations and combinations together with just enough cash to keep them alive, so Farley can tell them how to vote. If discontent still shows, increase relief? Not by a long shot! Appoint younger men to the judiciary. That wows the "radicals."

Russian style: Call them traitors; sabotegers, agents of foreign governments, purge, imprison or shoot them. Result: economic chaos. Then have Stalin make a speech for improved morale.

English style: Send George around to stutter a speech. That jolly well drives 'em gaga.

In France: The job is finished. Everybody is in one big happy People's Front family.

The Butcher and the Cattle

Stalin appeals for confidence and cooperation in a talk to "leaders" who replaced those recently shot, purged or in prison. Reminding them of the fate of their predecessors, Stalin said: "Leaders come and leaders go." In other words, cooperation or else....

A Rival for the C. P.

"The army is preparing to create a recruiting agency which could be relied upon in the event of war to enlist at least 500,000 volunteers in the first sixty days of hostilities."—N. Y. Times.

"Search for Peace"

Roosevelt's Administration in its "patient search for peace" reached Brooklyn Navy Yards. Work was started on a \$62,000,000 super-super dreadnought. Could anyone ask more forceful proof of "our" peaceful intentions?

Religion on the Wane

A recent survey of 10,000 representative citizens indicates that religion is losing ground... news item. A little more light might be shed on the picture by a glance over the sermons in New York last Sunday as reported in the Times. Reverend James M. Gilles: "I doubt that many of the so-called Christian leaders believe in a personal God... We can't even trust the people who go to Church every Sunday." Why "even?" The Reverend Dr. Wm. Ward Ayer: "The church ought always to take the side of manhood against the Moloch-money. But alas too many times her condemnations are hushed by the pleasant tinkle of gold." Very very sad! The Reverend Dr. Minot Simons was shocked by the sins of many well to do who have concern over hiring but none over firing "but their number grows less." Seek ye the C.I.O. and their number will dwindle to nothing. Yea verily! The Rev. Dr. Wentz: "Martin Luther's burning of the Pope's Bull in 1520 was the Boston Tea Party of the reformation." If Martin was only around now, what a fire he could start!