

Anti-War Convention Problems Under Discussion



In the Labor Unions

By B. J. WIDICK

The United Progressive Furriers of New York recently put the Stalinist administration of the International Fur Workers Union on the spot with an open letter to Ben Gold, Stalinist president of the International. "We are approaching already the middle of June but thousands of us are still crowding the sidewalks of the fur market—hungry, tired and worried," the letter points out.

"The convention of our union in Atlantic City had the task of solving partly these problems, but the leadership of the Joint Council forgot all about the sufferings of the fur workers," the letter accuses. It continues: "You, Mr. President, have contributed a great deal towards this present condition by stirring up one part of the workers against another. Since you came back from the convention a whole set of schemes and maneuvers were put into motion in order to whip the workers in line again."

"You were convinced through the open forums that the unemployed mean business, and have therefore advised the leadership of the Joint Council to rush through the convention decisions at the local meetings. You made your plan so that only few workers should attend local meetings."

Silence Critics

"Never in the history of our union were there any kind of meetings held on holidays. Will you please tell us Mr. President, why all the four local meetings were held on the two nights of the Jewish holiday, 'Shevuoth'?" Can you tell us why the largest local of our joint council, the Operators, with a membership of nearly 5,000 was assigned to meet in a hall that takes only about 300? Doesn't that prove that you were not interested to have the furriers make an honest decision?"

"At the local meetings we found out that one of your decisions at the convention is to silence those who dare criticize you and your friends. You call it 'democratization of the constitution.' You want everyone in our union to bow to the bureaucracy. You want us to close our eyes and shut our mouths to the so-called victory of temporary jobs, permits for learners, permits for over-time, in-human speed-up, clique rule in the shop, party domination in the union, dishonest elections, squandering of union money, collaboration with the bosses to the extent of obtaining thousands of dollars in loans from them."

"That is what you call democracy. But tell us please, Mr. President, if you were a rank and file today, would you also tolerate such conditions and accept in good faith such convention decisions?"

"Please be honest about it, Mr. President, you know that the workers are dissatisfied with the leadership in the Joint Council. You know that people in the labor movement have no use for totalitarian regimes even though they are covered by so-called united fronts such as you claim to have in our union. Aren't you ashamed to speak of rules and constitutions, when the entire history of your fight for power has shown a sneering attitude and full disregard for the union's constitution?"

"You have spoken at the local meeting of the cutters. You jumped and cursed everyone that disagreed with you, but you must admit you met with no success. . . Then your lieutenants tried hard to follow the footsteps of the 'Leader.' They even tried to outdo you in demagoguery, but the result was the same."

"Of course we admit one thing. You people know the game — you dragged out the meetings with meaningless speeches until the majority of those present left in disgust. Then with your own boys left, you were able to take a 'peoples' vote and pass all decisions 'overwhelmingly' with a few hundred votes from all of the four locals for the entire membership of 15,000. Is this democracy?"

Why No Referendum?

"But what about our proposal to put the convention decisions to a referendum? Don't you

On Making the Appeal a Paper for the Masses

STATEMENT ON THE SOCIALIST APPEAL BY THE AKRON BRANCH

The issuance of the Socialist Appeal as a twice weekly was a great step forward toward the winning of the masses by our movement. Our paper, however, is still far from being a mass organ. The changes that were made in the paper at the time of its becoming a twice weekly were for the most part regulatory and technical; the content, style, and make-up—in sum, the whole approach—remain too much the same.

Our paper is still too much a propaganda rather than a mass organ. It is still too academic in its approach; it is not agitational enough. The average worker finds the paper difficult. We tend to underestimate this difficulty because of our comparatively long experience in politics, but it is nevertheless a fact. Our experience in Akron, and in the Ohio-Michigan industrial area generally, confirms this.

Getting to Masses
A change in the Socialist Appeal along the lines which we shall indicate would, in our opinion, result shortly in our greater penetration into the masses and the consequent extension of our influence. In the process the Appeal financial crisis, which we are now trying to solve in an organizational way through the circulation department, would in good part be alleviated in the best way—through the workers actually looking forward to our paper as they do their evening bourgeois journal and continuing to buy it and boost it themselves.

Examining the Appeal from this point of view, then, the Akron branch would like to make the following suggestions:

(1) The stories should be shortened. We continually get complaints from workers that the stories are too long. Since much of our present membership has come to the position of the Fourth International through a period of ideological clarification gained chiefly through intensive reading during the time that we have remained largely a propaganda group, there is a tendency on the part of some of us to underestimate the difficulty which just plain length imposes upon the average worker. And from our own experience, even old party militants take a deep breath before jumping into an interminable story that continues for column after column.

Stories should be broken up into several parts, if necessary, and spread through the page. The background can be put in one story, the role of the C.P. in a box close to the main story, a feature highlight in a small box inserted in the story, etc.

The story should be continued quickly so that the front page, which should be snappy, filled with paragraph squibs, short news items, and feature material, will not be so solid. Recent issues of the Appeal have averaged around eight stories per issue on the front page. That is just too much to hurdle. We can learn from the bourgeois newspapers in this respect. Their stories are short, snappy, and within the limits of their ideology, punchy.

One thing that we should remember is this: You don't have to explain everything every time. There should be more sloganizing, less long-winded explaining.

Simple Stories
(2) Stories should be simplified. The stories, we hear again and again from workers in the shops, are too complex. The paragraphs and sentences are too long, the words are too big. In this connection it might be well to have a style sheet for the Appeal just as bourgeois papers do, in order that the writing might be standardized in the most effective style. Here, too, it should be remembered, it is a question not only of the worker's relatively low

think, Mr. President, that such important decisions as elections once in two years to which the membership obligates itself to provide people with two years' pay and vacations, and the boarding of the leatherworkers in the house of the fur workers which will involve us in new expenses with possible jurisdictional friction in the future. And last but not least, the silencing of the critics. That all these are important enough to be decided by all the fur workers and not by a handful of those present at the local meetings?"

cultural level, but of the conditioning he has received from reading popular bourgeois and labor papers. We should take this conditioning into account and adapt our style to what he has been accustomed to. And one of the first things to be done is to shorten the paragraphs, sentences, and words.

Because it has become so much a part of us, we are sometimes not aware how much revolutionary jargon we employ in our press, and just how much of it is incomprehensible to the average working stiff. It is a fact that to a large number of militant workers, representing strata that have been touched by no working class party such expressions as "bourgeoisie," "C. P.," "imperialist war," "class conscious," "bureaucrat," "class collaboration," "demagoguery," "maneuver," etc., etc., have either no meaning at all or else a very fuzzy one. While recognizing that these words have a historical justification and a historical necessity and that they are important weapons in our intervention in the class struggle, we must be careful not to let them become easy substitutes for careful explanation, simple terms, and fresh approaches to old problems.

"Speak American"
Linked with this problem is our notable failure—barring certain happy exceptions—to speak American. We do not speak English as she is spoke. Judicious use should be made of such native expressions as "going to town," "getting to first base," "on the make," "muscling in," "angel," "carrying the ball," "the razzberry," "putting him on the spot," etc. This approach could be especially well used in the cartoons.

Foreign phenomena should be presented in the closest analogous American terms. In this respect Krivitsky's articles in the Saturday Evening Post give some excellent pointers on how to explain the Russian situation. Expressions such as "the Leningrad machine," "the party bosses," and "patronage," for example, explain more than the ordinary detailed exposition does in many more words.

In much of our material—especially the feature stuff—there is not enough illustrative material, not enough analogies, not enough simple comparisons to make clear and clinch our theoretical points. Of our writers, Bill Morgan does the best job in this respect. We can learn here, for instance, from the popular technique of Oscar Ameringer and the homespun style of the early American socialist movement.

By and About Workers
As far as the Appeal is concerned, the American worker is an abstraction, upon whom we peer benignantly from our aerial theoretical heights. But of the actual worker—what he's thinking, what he's sore about, what he's doing in the shop, what his wife has to say about the whole business, what he said to the relief investigator, what the foreman said to him and what he said to the foreman, what happened during the last strike—little of this appears in our press.

We need more stories about workers—and more stories by workers. By having them we will be better able to gauge the temper of the masses, and the masses will begin to read us and to be influenced by us. One has only to recall how Plechanov and Lenin in exile pounced upon every bona fide worker of whatever level of development who came abroad and how they questioned him, drained him of information. We should do the same for the Appeal.

S.W.P. CONVENTION OPENS FRIDAY
(Continued from Page 1)
building up a movement for Workers' Defense Guards against the reactionary mobsters. Other points scheduled for discussion include the Negro question in the United States, the development of the world movement of the Fourth International, the work among the youth, and other urgent matters which have already formed the basis for an extensive discussion in the ranks of the party membership before the convention.

Following the mass meeting on Friday, sessions of the convention will be open only to members of the Party and the Y.P.S.L.

ANNOUNCEMENTS
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A PROPOSED REVISION OF SECTION EIGHT

By DONALD BERGNER

Section 8 of the Political Resolution should be more concrete. It is not sufficient to repeat our position against imperialism. The first two points below are concretizations; the third point deals with the problem raised by comrade Green's amendment (Appeal: June 20).

1. The Party should conduct a campaign for the immediate independence of Puerto Rico and the other colonies. We must expose the hypocritical prattlings of our imperialists, as our French comrades have been doing, by spreading the truth about their brutal exploitation of the colonial peoples. When the social-patriots shriek about "Poor little Czechoslovakia," we must teach the workers to answer: "And what about Puerto Rico?" Not only our duty as the revolutionary opposition in the homeland of the imperialist exploiter is involved here, but also our effectiveness in combating the jingo and super-patriots.

Our Responsibility
2. Pedro Albizu Campos and other Puerto Rican anti-imperialists are rotting in the Federal Penitentiary. Not in some far-off country in South America but right here in the United States. They are in jail for "sedition" against the Wall Street government. The fight for their release is our responsibility, it cannot be confined to occasional mention in the Appeal, nor is it primarily the task of our sections in Latin America. It is our work, here. We must take the lead in a campaign for their immediate release, asking such groups as the American Fund, labor unions and Latin American organizations to take an active part in it.

3. Our propaganda must make it clear that we are opposed to all imperialist oppression in Latin America. But that is not enough. Our main enemy is still "at home." That is, as the U. S. section of the 4th International our agitational task is to expose and defeat the machinations of U. S. imperialism. Furthermore it must be pointed out that where Nazi fascism comes to Latin America it finds much of its work (from the "ideological" point of view of making the people accustomed to dictatorship) already accomplished by the Yankee imperialists and their native tools. And in most of Latin America it is U. S. imperialism that is the main enemy. But Latin America is not one country. The relationship between our broad, general propaganda and the agitational necessities varies in different countries and situations. Agitation "Against Yankee, German and British Imperialism," while correct at present in Bolivia, would be ludicrous in Puerto Rico.

Illinois Jobless Back Yipsel Job Campaign

CHICAGO—A real impetus has been given the Jobs for Youth Campaign by the endorsement of the House of Delegates of the Illinois Workers Alliance, leading body of the unemployed organization in Chicago. The I.W.A. has taken upon itself the task of popularizing the campaign among its members and the unemployed in general. 40 petition blanks were taken by the delegates to have filled out by the Alliance locals, as a starter.

The backing of the I.W.A., which has 12 branches in Chicago marks a substantial gain for the Jobs Campaign.

Who Is Coughlin, What Is His Program, How Did He Rise?

By JOSEPH HANSEN
INSTALLMENT VI

Who Is Behind Father Coughlin?

What Father Coughlin's secret files at the Shrine of the Little Flower would reveal as to his financial backers can only be imagined.

Hitler's movement, when it was in the same stage as Father Coughlin's, was secretly backed by powerful financial interests—the steel magnate Thyssen and other powerful German capitalists.

Occasionally Coughlin will mention certain capitalists favorably in his radio broadcasts—Henry Ford, Walter P. Chrysler, James Rand. Father Coughlin stayed at the San Simeon ranch of William Randolph Hearst while on a visit to California. Mr. G. A. Richards, president of WJR is a generous financial backer mentioned by Coughlin. He mentions too in one of his broadcasts (Father Charles E. Coughlin, an official biography, p. 107.) the visit of Harris and LeBlanc to his shrine for intimate conversations, Robert M. Harris of the New York Cotton Exchange—a southern bourbon well-known as a cotton and silver speculator, and George LeBlanc described by Coughlin as "perhaps the world's foremost gold trader" (an international banker!).

The forces in Coughlin's financial background are, as sinister as the forces that directed the breaking of the Little Steel Strike.

Coughlin's Program and the Fascist Program

Coughlin's program as it now stands bears a remarkable resemblance to the programs of fascism and Nazism when they were at a similar stage.

Coughlin appeals to the dissatisfied and restless unemployed workers and youth, and the farmers and small merchants who are facing bankruptcy.

Hitler directed his appeals to the same sections of the population.

Mussolini built his movement from similar ranks.

Coughlin, like his predecessors proposes a "just and living annual wage," "cost of production plus a fair profit to the farmer," etc. He attacks democratic capitalism just as Mussolini and Hitler did, and attacks it contemptuously.

He proposes "revolution" as they did, the use of force. He attacks the failure of the New Deal to solve unemployment. He attacks its war program.

Coughlin is attempting to divert these revolutionary layers of the oppressed masses, just as Mussolini and Hitler before him did, from striking at the very heart and core of the system that produces unemployment. He turns their rage against the "international bankers," the "Jews," the "money system." He proposes economic reforms chiefly in the realms of banking and currency. In this way, like Mussolini and Hitler, he attempts to dissipate the revolutionary energy of the masses against bundles of painted straw.

To the capitalists he makes clear exactly where he stands by expressing his devotion to capitalism and the private ownership of property. For certain public necessities and natural resources he advocates nationalization; but he emphasizes that he doesn't want nationalization of industry.

Some of Hitler's most prominent demands make interesting reading beside Coughlin's. The Nazi platform for instance called for "abolition of the domination of interest," "the complete confiscation of all war profits," and "participation in the profits of large concerns."

These demands, of course, were NEVER carried out.

"Practically all the sixteen principles of social justice are being put into practice in Italy and Germany." (Social Justice, February 13, 1939, p. 7.)

Let that statement of Coughlin's burn like fire on your memory!

And we might remind the lieutenants of Father Coughlin, that the secondary leaders in Hitler's organization who insisted on carrying out the Nazi program were "purged" in a ghastly blood bath.

When fascism marches into power it smashes the trade unions, arrests the regularly-elected leaders and appoints fascist chiefs in their place who dictate the new rules and regulations. They confiscate the union treasury.

They build barbed wire concentration camps and herd the unemployed inside at bayonet point.

They spread the industrial spy system throughout every city, town, and hamlet of the entire nation and intensify its grip a thousandfold.

Libraries are burned. Schools are shut down. Hours are lengthened. Wages are slashed. The speed-up is whipped up to new heights. Terror and torture are turned loose. The streets flow with blood. Strikes are punished with death. Racial minorities such as the Jews and the Negroes are nailed to the cross.

Fascism is hell for the workers and the unemployed. But it saves the profits of the small handful of capitalists who control the nation's wealth. And some obscure figure becomes the all-powerful dictator of the nation's fate.

To many good-hearted people it seems impossible that fascism could come to the United States.

But it is impossible to wish away 17,000,000 unemployed.

It is impossible to wish away the dizzy downward plunge of the rate of capitalist profit since 1929.

And it is impossible to wish away the storm-troopers

THE BRANCHES COME THROUGH:

"Enclosed find a money order for \$20.25—\$10.00 on our Appeal account and the balance for new subscriptions."—S. R. Chicago literature-agent.

"Enclosed find \$14.00 to pay up on our account and \$5.00 in advance."—E. Washburn, St. Louis Appeal agent.

RESULTS OF RENEWAL

The campaign to obtain renewal subscriptions from our readers who, for one reason or another, had failed to continue their subscriptions has been completed.

While the results were not to

cur expectations, nevertheless, some branches did a splendid job and accomplished more than their share.

Slightly over 100 renewal subs were obtained in a little over one month's time. The outstanding branches were Minneapolis, with 29 renewal subs; New York City, 17; Boston, 7; Philadelphia, 8.

Minneapolis easily did the best job, with Boston and Philadelphia next.

NOTICE: Please make all checks, money orders, etc. payable to the SOCIALIST APPEAL. Do not make them out to the editor or manager. Kindly adhere to this request.

C. P. Leadership of Bedding Local 140 Persecutes Critic

Answer Joe Kitain's Charge of Union Misrule by Deliberate Hounding Campaign

The Communist Party clique running Bedding Local 140 has been persecuting a worker, Joseph Kitain, ever since he opened his mouth and dared to oppose the corrupt acts of the administration.

Joseph Magliacano, the secretary-treasurer, even went so far as to physically assault Kitain.

Kitain exposed differences in wage scales, the leaving of prices and conditions to a "mediation board," favoritism for C. P. members, non-existence of "equal division of work," exorbitant dues, and the lack of representation for the spring makers, who numerically make up 45% of the membership.

Don't Answer Charges
Instead of replying to Kitain's charges, the officers, Joseph Magliacano, Alex Sirota, and Sol Kitain, in the usual manner, called Joe Kitain a Trotskyite disrupter.

It may be interesting to note that Magliacano was never a bedding worker, but is a barber. He was not able to do his Stalinist dirty work in the barber's union, so he was imported by the C.P. into Bedding Local 140, where he immediately became an officer, contrary to the by-laws.

The C. P. leadership, as they do in every union they control, out of the union funds paid in by the sweat of the workers, proposed contributions to their Stalinist puppet organizations, such as the American League for Peace and Democracy. They officially sponsored and put pressure on the membership to purchase fake raffles entitled "Proceeds—For Support of Labor Newspapers and Labor Schools"—which "labor" newspapers and schools must have been the Daily Worker and the C. P. Workers School, for there never was any drawing of the raffle and no one ever reported what was done with the hundreds of dollars that were collected.

Fear Opposition
Although Joe Kitain was only

a relatively new member, he ran for the Executive Board and received a vote that amounted to 25% of Sirota's, who received the biggest vote. The polls and count were of course controlled entirely by the C. P. administration. A demand for voting machines was rejected by the administration.

The controlling clique, seeing the growth of the opposition around Joe Kitain, determined, at any cost, to get rid of him. His life was made miserable in the shop and he was physically threatened many times. His fellow workers were intimidated and were afraid to talk to him. False charges were framed against him.

By crooked manipulations, they tried to force him to take a low-paid stretcher's job, but he refused. He was fined large sums a number of times. After a long time, he was suspended for a month, and then in an illegal "trial" without any specification of charges, he was "expelled" by the executive board. He was deprived of his job and his livelihood without a hearing before the membership and was obliged to eke out a subsistence from unemployment insurance. In typical Moscow fashion, Joseph Malman, a member who supported Kitain's fight for bread and butter, was forced to confess and repent his sins in a letter published June 3, 1939, in the Furniture Workers Press.

Consent to Hearing

But Joe Kitain did not sleep. He immediately began a campaign of agitation which has lasted for four months. He circulated the membership in the different shops and picketed the office of the union.

The struggle was difficult, but it finally had its effect. The corrupt leadership is beginning to feel it, and has begun to fear for its existence. They have finally consented to give Joe Kitain a hearing before the membership at the meeting to be held June 22, 1939, at Irving Plaza Hall.

being trained by fascist organizations right now in America.

In city after city, the fascist movement is spreading. Trained squads of Coughlinites, protected by the police, sell Social Justice in the busiest streets of every city, in workers' sections, in predominantly Jewish and Negro sections.

Fights between workers and fascists break out almost every day.

(To be continued in next issue)

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