

In the World of Labor

By Paul G. Stevens

Aftermath of Belgian Elections: An Attack against the Miners

Taking heart from the rightward trend in the recent elections, the Belgian bosses are launching a large-scale onslaught on the conditions obtained by the working class of that country during the great strikes of 1936. As a first step, the mine barons are proceeding against the coal diggers of the Borinage section, in an attempt to scale down present conditions in the new agreement.

The Borinage section is known as a hot-bed of militancy. As such it has been chosen purposely, to test the ground for the great struggle ahead. If they succeed here, the bosses calculate, half their battle is won.

When the new terms were offered the miners of the Levant and Produits du Flenu pits, they were rejected out of hand. The bosses replied by locking out the workers of these pits, some 5,000 miners. The reformist leaders of the miners' union have, up to the present, contented themselves with appeals for aid to King Leopold, calling on the workers to remain calm and accustom themselves to the unemployment relief to which they are entitled as a result of the lock-out. Since, as is self-evident, no family can very long subsist on the meagre dole, such a course cannot help leading to a break-down of the miners' resistance if persisted in.

Our comrades of the Revolutionary Socialist Party of Belgium, concentrating their forces in this region, are holding successful meetings in all the mining towns urging the workers of the Borinage to bring pressure for the calling of a general strike in support of the Levant and Flenu miners. The movement in this direction is growing. A twenty-four hour sympathy strike has already been proposed in several unions. The success of such action alone, our comrades argue can forestall the wholesale onslaught on Belgian labor being cooked up by the bosses.

Another Sample of French Democracy in the Colonies

Recently we reported in these columns the great election victory of the Popular Party of Algiers, the Algerian party which is closely allied with the French revolutionary socialists. Douar Mohamed, of that party was elected as a general councillor.

Now the Council of the Prefecture, the agency of the French colonial office, has seen fit to annul his election on the petition of his imperialist opponent, Zerrouk. The latter was declared elected although he polled less than 3,000 votes out of a total of 15,000 cast.

The grounds for the decision are so flimsy,

that French friends of the P.P.A. expect to carry the fight against it with considerable support.

A Voice in the Wilderness: Anti-War Speaker at Southport

Most of the speeches at the recent Southport conference of the British Labour Party were, of course, in favor of the "war against the aggressors" and in "defense of democracy," laying the ground for the acceptance of conscription. One of the most rabid war mongers was party leader Hugh Dalton. Apparently Dalton's spiel was too much for one old-time militant who found his way to the conference by chance. Here is how one of the British papers reported his reaction:

"Mr. J. Wood (Moseley), a self-styled old soldier who waved the Guards necktie to the delegates said:

"My greatest enemy during the war was not the 'Jerry' on the other side of No Man's Land, but my own Sergeant-Major."

"Let Sergeant-Major Dalton do his own dirty work when the war comes. I'm not going to do it—not Pygmalion likely!"

The Labour Party's Daily Herald did not see fit to include this speech in its accounts of the conference sessions.

Strike Waves Gaining Momentum in India

Comrade Stanley submits the following item:

Official strike statistics for 1938 just published by the Government of India indicate the extent of the revival in the Indian revolutionary and nationalist movement.

Strikes in 1938 were the highest on record for the past 20 years. There were 399 of them as compared with 379 for 1937. The number of working days on strike (not hours, as in American statistics—S.S.) was 9,000,000 and the workers were successful in 46% of the strikes.

Textile workers (the "untouchables" of India) again proved themselves to be the vanguard of the Indian proletariat. They accounted for 39% of the strikes, 70.8% of the workers involved and 71.1% of the working days spent on strike.

Two major working class activities are now under way in India. Both, in all likelihood, will lead to All-India general strikes involving the textile and railway workers. The former, concentrated in Bombay, Allahabad, Cawnpur, Ahmedabad, etc., are already preparing a general strike to combat a proposed 12% wage cut. The railway workers, solidly organized in the All-India Railwaymen's Federation, have presented demands with a 3-month ultimatum, half of which has already passed.

War Crisis Simmers on Europe and Asia Fronts

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Hitler must plunge ahead, forced on his course by the insistent pressure of a starving nation. Britain and France have their two million men ready for war and the Chamberlains and Halifaxes and Daladiers emulate the Goebbels and Goerings in spewing threats across the air waves of Europe.

Many Sarajevo Today's world crisis doesn't need a Sarajevo. During the last three or four years there have been Sarajevo's ten thousand times multiplied, but the boss politicians have held back, fearful on all sides of the fighting fronts of what this war will mean. Their trouble is that they can't stop it. Capitalism organizes the world into rival gangs, constantly muscling in on each other, constantly at war either to make a haul or to protect one they made awhile ago. They are just like any other gangs, with the same motives, the same greed, the same ruthlessness. Only they rule the world and they can move people and armies around like checkers on a board—and because we let them—they can condemn us to die—millions of us to die to keep them and their gold intact in their banks and counting houses.

Wide Front If the rulers of Britain and France actually decide this summer that they cannot safely offer any more concessions to Hitler, there will be war. If a few fresh concessions are made, the war will be postponed again, but only for a short period. That is the sum and substance of the situation as the complicated and foul game of diplomatic and military maneuvering begins again in Europe, with millions of lives at stake.

These maneuvers are now distributed along a vast front. In the Far East the Japanese end of the axis is bringing its pressure to bear on the beleaguered British imperialists—who now find themselves being ousted from their pirate strongholds by the young upstart pirates from Tokyo. On the Mongolian frontier Japan and Russia are engaged in a new test of strength, a new mutual measuring of forces. In Moscow the Kremlin is still holding Britain and France at arm's length, awaiting the arrival from Berlin of the German ambassador, von Schulenberg, who undoubtedly brings Hitler's latest counter-proposals, masked in the form of a "trade" agreement.

F.D.R.: War President Along the Polish frontier Hitler is massing millions and in the Limes line, facing France, Switzerland, Belgium, and the Netherlands, he is parading the outward signs of his strength.

In Washington sits Roosevelt, paying out billions for this country's war machine and watching to see how things go in Europe. If war comes, his coy silence about a third term will come sharply to an end, for F.D.R. has cut himself out the role of next war president. It is in preparation for that role that he is jettisoning the jobless and making terms with his bosses, the Morgans and Duponts and Rockefeller, for the next steps of his War Deal.

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In the party, taking their places side by side with the honest and serious revolutionists, belong those who would make good the final victory of socialism over capitalism. Outside the party they can only criticize and find little faults which in the long run mean nothing. The snipers and egotistic generals without armies and the super wise guys will one day have to answer to the workers for their failure to lend a hand when a hand was needed.

If all those who are waiting for the train would only realize that the train may be waiting for them perhaps we would be on our way—but you may rest assured that when the train is ready to start it is not going to wait around for the Johnny-come-latelys or the birds who stood around refusing to embark unless they were given personal privileges.

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Quits C. P., Joins "Growing Parade of Revolutionists"

Declaring that she was joining "the growing parade of revolutionists who are leaving the Communist Party to enlist in the Socialist Workers Party," Betty Fisher, for the last five years a member of the New York Communist Party and Young Communist League, resigned this week from that organization.

"Recent events," she declared, "have opened my eyes to the truth. The Communist Party has renounced its militant past. It has become the tail of the New Deal kite. It has become a bulwark of the status quo—17 million unemployed, insecurity, and the threat of Fascism and war. And like all defenders of capitalist 'democracy,' it has no regard for democracy within its own ranks."

Comrade Fisher declared that her recent experiences had convinced her that the Fourth Internationalists of the Socialist Workers Party were the only ones carrying on a militant and revolutionary struggle against capitalism and war, and she called upon all of her C.P. comrades to follow in her steps and join in the fight for a Socialist world.

COUNCILMEN IN ATTACK ON OTTO POPOVICH

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tions but failed because of the solidarity and militancy of the unemployed. The tone of the relief bureau representatives soon changed and the U.P.W.U. was able to receive favorable consideration of the 17 cases.

Ridicule Unemployed At the June 20 meeting of the City Council, the Queens Councilmen, Democratic and Republican, took advantage of the introduction of a reactionary bill by Republican Abner Surpless to attack severely Popovich and the unemployed movement.

Surpless proposed to divert \$100,000 of relief funds for an "investigation" of relief. Rallying behind this open theft of relief funds, Councilman Quinn of Queens opened an attack on Popovich who had led the picketing of his home. He tried to ridicule the demands of the picketers for \$150 a month cash relief, money to pay the rent and a weekly allowance of 60 cents for ice. These men don't seem to think the unemployed have to live.

Very Poor Humor Quinn also remarked that he understood "vich" meant "son of a bitch" and wondered why all these "viches" didn't go back where they came from. This low attempt at humor at the expense of the unemployed who must live under conditions of extreme misery in the richest city in the world provoked laughter from the well-paid and well-fed Councilmen assembled in City Hall.

But their laughter was at their own expense for the U.P.W.U. had demonstrated that mass labor action can effectively wipe the sneers from the faces of these politicians.

Join the Socialist Workers Party

Revolt Growing in N. M. U. Against Rotten Leadership

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In the Gulf district, most powerful against the shipowners and least dominated by the C.P. wrecking crew, revolt is in full swing. The June 12 joint meeting in New Orleans unanimously endorsed recommendations from the Gulf District Committee which actually creates an autonomous unit of the union in that area. Included were decisions to publish an independent paper and to "sell all the Pilots (official C.P. dominated paper) to the junk and rag man at twenty cents a hundred pounds," to call an Agents' conference "for the purpose of consolidating the Gulf into one compact body", granting powers to appoint organizers and to remove officers without the sanction of New York, and finally, to retain all funds collected in the Gulf for Gulf organization.

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in Curran's goon-squad expedition to the Gulf where, at present, he faces jail charges for suggesting a seaman with a baseball bat. The affairs of the entire union are reduced to a series of gutter brawl.

Both GUILTY These events and this disgraceful state of affairs are a direct consequence of the joint King-Curran misleadership of the union which has cooperated 100% in sabotaging crew militancy, making a mockery of inner union democracy, drowning the tanker strike in hot oil, and, worst of all, chaining the seamen to the fink hall sea-slavery program of the U. S. Government's Maritime Commission. Now that the reactionary King clique have fallen out with the reactionary Curran-Communist Party clique over a division of their joint plunder from the seamen both sides are exposing each other.

The cross fire gives complete

Toward the Party Convention

On the Relation Between Mass Agitation and Trade Union Work

By JAMES P. CANNON

Practically all the serious articles contributed to the party pre-convention discussion by individual comrades, groups or party committees emphasize the same point: Mass work. Different proposals are made. There are different evaluations of the past activity of the party. Some comrades offer more ambitious plans, and some betray more impatience than others. But all apparently pursue the same aim, the decisive turn of the party to mass work and the more efficient organization of this work. From this we can see that the party is united at least to this extent: It knows what it wants. So far, so good.

But that does not solve the whole problem. It only poses the problem. The aspiration to direct all attention to the broad masses and to gain a wider influence over them is not new or original with us. There is nothing in this aspiration, of itself, to distinguish us from other parties. Leaving aside the sects and mutual admiration societies, which habituate themselves to isolation as something normal and also desirable, all parties, whether bourgeois or proletarian, strive to win mass support and work out for themselves various techniques of mass appeal.

There Is No Short Cut

An agreement in general on the necessity of a more decisive turn to mass work, such as we appear to have, signifies only that we consider ourselves ready to enter into active and direct competition with all political tendencies for the support of the working masses. Our success in this competition in our time will be determined by how much we understand our own problem and apply that understanding in practice. Here, as our party discussion has disclosed, we run into difficulties and differences of opinion.

Some of these differences are simply matters of emphasis. Others represent conflicting conceptions, and that is far more serious. With others, impatience to reach the agreed-upon objective is giving rise to ideas which are false in conception and which, if adopted by the party, would have fatal consequences. One of these false ideas born of impatience is the idea that we can find a short cut to a mass movement over the head of the trade unions. I mention this first because it is the most fundamental and the most dangerous. There are numerous other misconceptions, all related however. A considerable section of our movement, in its impatience to get to the masses, is experimenting with ultra-radical nostrums which, ironically enough, are the surest means of assuring a permanent isolation from the masses.

These sentiments are most conspicuous among the youth whose leaders, apparently, consider it fashionable to play a little bit with adventurism and leftist phrasemongering. If one put his mind to it he couldn't think out a better way of wasting the energy and courage of our young militants and of guaranteeing the eventual reaction of disillusionment and discouragement.

Mass work has many forms. It is necessary to combine them in such a way that each separate division serves the others. The modern proletariat is accustomed to act through its organizations. Most basic and fundamental of these are the trade unions. A party which aims to lead the working class must acquire a strong base of support and a leading influence in the unions. That is what the founding convention of the party a year and a half ago had in mind when it issued the sweeping slogan, "Ninety percent of party work must be directed to the trade unions."

Was this slogan incorrect? Or, has something happened in the past eighteen months to change the nature of workers' organizations and the workers' habit of acting through them? Not at all. But the impatience of some comrades for action is leading them to flirt with the most grotesque ideas in this respect, ideas which they may consider "new," but which in reality are as old as the Marxist struggle against anarchist adventurism.

We hear it said nowadays that the unions are too slow in responding and that we must go direct to the masses. The masses, it seems, are something entirely outside the unions with their seven million or so members. The masses are presumably only waiting to hear from us, and are ready to act without the formality of organization. Even the Ohio-Michigan District Committee of the party,

whose jurisdiction covers precisely the heart of the field of the great new unions of workers in the mass production industries, take a rather cross-eyed view of this question. They permit themselves to advocate a program of action which, they say, "can be conducted independently of the limitations and uncertainties of the trade union movement." (Socialist Appeal, June 27).

No doubt, the members of the Ohio-Michigan District Committee, who have seen and taken part in workers' demonstrations of power through their unions, knew better. Perhaps they just took a Sunday off for a manifesto spree. Or, possibly, they sought by this high-sounding formula, and the ambiguous verbiage which follows it, to make a "concession" to still more radical comrades who are "tired of waiting for the trade unions." But this sort of concessions and compromises will not do. The party convention must determine the correct approach to mass work and firmly reject the false. Otherwise we will have a smash-up.

Deeper into the Unions!

We cannot yield anything from the "90 trade union" formula of our founding convention, not even one per cent. Mass agitation in general must be conceived, organized and developed, not as a substitute for the systematic penetration of the trade unions but as a supplement to it. We to the party that despairs of the trade unions and turns away from them! The harder such a party works and the more hysterically it shouts the sooner it will wear itself out.

Trade union work is not easy. Moreover it is restricted in scope, not complete of itself—herein the syndicalists commit one of their greatest errors—and must be supplemented all the time by the general political and agitational work of the party. But even this general work of the party, unrestricted in its scope by any trade union rules or customs, is directed primarily to the workers organized into unions. They alone are capable of sustained action, precisely because they alone are organized.

True enough, we appeal to all workers. In some cases we appeal most directly and immediately to the unorganized—who are the most exploited and deprived. But what is the first suggestion we offer to such workers, if they respond to our appeal? We advise them to join a trade union, or if unemployed, a union of the unemployed. We cannot go around the unions, and we have no desire to. Our slogan is, "Deeper into the Unions!" Every campaign of general mass agitation must aim to deepen and strengthen our influence in the unions.

No Room for Two Opinions

Trade union work requires patience, endurance and skill. In very few unions, at present, is it possible to unfold the whole program of the Fourth International. In many unions, dominated by red-baiting bureaucrats, it is necessary for revolutionary militants to refrain from exposing themselves to expulsion by advertising their political affiliations. Revolutionary trade union work, as a rule, in America, is quiet, mole-like, unobtrusive. To carry on such work unflinchingly; to work in the unions in piece-meal fashion for parts of the program while holding fast to the party, which in its general agitation expounds and defends the program as a whole; to be attentive to the smallest union issues of the day without succumbing to opportunism; to trench one's self and be in a position to influence the whole union when the time for action comes—these are among the sternest and most important revolutionary tests today.

Such tasks require courage, persistence and prudence. It is easy to shrug them, or to fail miserably in their performance. We know such cases, and the super-radicalism of the delinquents is poor consolation to the party which needs influence and support in the unions more than it needs anything else. It is easy to fight one's way out of a union by ill-considered tactics, and still easier to talk one's way out. But what the party needs is militants who know how to dig deep into the unions and stay there, gather a circle of sympathizers and supporters about them, and transmit their personal influence into party support in the trade union movement.

The party convention should emphasize this necessity once again. There is no room for two opinions on this question.

proof that both sets of misleaders are guilty as hell on all counts of conspiring with the shipowners, violation of the union constitution and financial mismanagement. This guilt is sufficient to read both gangs out of the labor movement for all time. However it is equally significant that both gangs carefully avoid the worst crimes of both. The consistent betrayal to Maritime Commission sea-slavery receives not one word in the thousands poured out by the rival organs. Partial reports from the Gulf indicate a similar willful blindness to the life or death issue facing the maritime workers and the maritime unions on all coasts.

The Only Course

The continued existence of the maritime unions, depends on consistent, uncompromising organized war against the sea-slavery program of the government and against all its agents in maritime union ranks. In the course, the only course, for all seamen on all coasts is fighting unity with their brothers, who take a clear uncompromising stand against the fink-hall, fink-training, union smashing program of the Government and its Curran-King stooges.

N. Y. PAINTERS DEAL BLOW TO C. P. MACHINE

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union members who were intent on returning the union to its membership regardless of political affiliation.

The Stalinists may have some satisfaction in the fact that by their special conniving, they managed to obtain the defeat of Dennis Cronin, running for business agent of local 5 on the progressive ticket, who was one of the founders of the Painters Educational Society, and among the most intransigent leaders of the opposition. But that is a short-lived satisfaction. For their sun in the Painters Union has set. The machine's rule has been broken. In the future, painters will know how to accord their right places to the militants who have been in the forefront of the struggle for them.

The job of the progressives is tremendous. They have a frightful mess to clean up—the

heritage left to them by the union wreckers. It is up to them now to elaborate in the concrete the program they have claimed as their own. Without giving any comfort to the red-baiters, they must put the union back on its feet and win over to their side the misled followers of the C.P. by a program of militancy that is in line with the times. The slogans of the six-hour day and of large-scale slush clearance projects can become powerful means of rehabilitating the union. The inner-union structure will no doubt undergo the democratic reforms—rotation system of job assignment, secret ballot on taxes and assessments, election of all officers, etc.—that the progressives have stood for from the first.

An article by Nathan Levine on Mrs. Rubens' "release" from a Soviet jail and her interview with American newspapermen will appear in the next issue of the Socialist Appeal.

At Your Service
THE APPEAL
POSTER SHOP

On the Line . . . with Bill Morgan

Once upon a time, a long time ago, there was a young fellow on his way to visit his uncle who lived across the plains and over the mountains. This young fellow walked and walked until he came to a railroad station at the foot of the mountains and there he saw a great long train which was about to leave for the town where his uncle lived.

At once he decided to walk no more. He would ride on the train. So he went to the ticket agent and purchased a ticket and then he went out on the platform and waited for the train to get started. He waited and he waited but still the train did not move. He walked up and down and smoked several cigars until he became so impatient that he could not wait any longer. Then he walked up to the front of the train and began to cuss at the engineer.

"What the hell is the matter with this train? Why don't you get under way? How can you expect people to ride on your damn railroad if you stall around like this? What the hell is wrong with you? What are you waiting for?"

No Time to Be Active

"Waiting for?" asked the engineer, "Why were we waiting for you to get on board the train!"

It is an old story and you have heard it before. But it always reminds me of the impatient people who cannot find time to become active in the revolutionary movement and who are always so very critical of the party unless the party happens to be engaged in a campaign which these people happen to think is a good idea at the time.

They are always trying to find some reason for not actually engaging in the necessary work of the party and at the same time they cannot understand—at least they claim they cannot understand—why the party doesn't do this and doesn't do that, etc., etc.

When pressed they swear great oaths of loyalty to the working class and to the revolutionary movement. But as to doing anything—well, you see they cannot agree with this phase of the work or they cannot understand just what is holding back the outbreak of social upheaval.

They are ready and willing, you understand, but until the party comes around to their point of view on this question or that there can be no cooperation. The working class and the party will just have to see things their way or it's no go. In the meantime, they go about their own little businesses and ease their little minds with small nothings.

Revolutionary? Indeed! They are to the left of the party, you understand. Some of them have even left the movement on the grounds that the movement was too far to the right on this question or that. Are they left indeed. . . . In fact they are so far to the left that they cannot find a place in the revolutionary party and have not the patience to wait until the party and the working class can catch up with them.

Of course, if after considerable time—say three or four months—they suddenly blossom out in support of the war or in agreement with some bureaucrat in the trade unions, well, after all, you can't say they didn't warn the workers to hurry up and catch up with their ideas and theories when the catching up was good.

If the working class and the party did not take their advice when they offered it, well,

how can they be blamed for trying to make a living and at the same time justifying their retreat from the field of action?

And, if, in the meantime, they hang around the fringes of the movement trying to pick up a disciple or two, discourage one or two youngsters with their line of ultra-ultra leftism, well, you understand that they must have a following or a couple of disciples. After all, it is easier to impress a new comer or a youngster than it is to convince the membership—especially where there are people who fight back and refuse to be taken in by some fly-by-night brain trust with an ego as big as his head.

Fear Judgment of Members

It is one thing to take some inexperienced young student or worker aside and whisper all sorts of fantastic stories and spin strange tales about the movement and it is something else to come out in the open and present their ideas and charges where answers are ready and waiting. This they know and so they invent reasons for being inactive, for remaining outside the party. Answers which sometimes sound good over a cup of coffee but which could not hold water before the membership.

Inside the party, where every comrade has the right and the duty to present his ideas and to have his opinions considered by the membership, where the workers forge their ideas into clean sharp weapons for the fight against reaction and slavery, these cowards have no place. They fear the honest judgment of serious revolutionists who are quick to recognize fakery and personal ambition.

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