

Speed Up the Unemployment Campaign; Fight Starvation

By WM. Z. FOSTER.

That there is in many Party districts a serious underestimation of the vital importance of the struggle around the issue of unemployment is now plainly manifest. This underestimation is evidenced by the inadequate and lackadaisical manner in which the Party line on unemployment is being put into effect. The immediate and drastic correction of this weakness is of the greatest importance for our Party.

There has been a clear line laid down for the unemployed campaign. This includes the establishment of local unemployment councils, the setting up of local united front movements with workers' organizations, the development of hunger marches and other local struggles around programs of immediate relief, the securing of mass signatures for the Workers' Unemployment Insurance Bill, the election of delegates to present this bill to Congress, the making of preparations for a great national unemployment demonstration on February 10th, etc.

A Fight Against Mass Hunger.

It is a logical and definite program capable of mobilizing mass forces and of developing real struggle. It is also well within the possibilities of our strength. Concise, detailed directives have been sent out on

every phase of it. It is based soundly upon the terrific situation of mass hunger and growing radicalization of the workers.

Nevertheless, the program is not being put into effect satisfactorily. In practically every district there is gross neglect of some or all phases of it. In no district is the campaign being carried on as aggressively as it should be.

Especially widespread is the seriously wrong tendency (despite repeated warnings from the center) to ignore the smaller industrial towns and to limit the unemployment campaign to the great cities. The struggle against unemployment is the central campaign of our Party, but it is no exaggeration to state that only a fraction of the available strength of the Party is now being used in the work.

Into the Fight Against Unemployment!

It is idle to ascribe this lassitude simply to organizational weakness or to the inexperience of local comrades. There is also a political element in it—a certain underestimation of the unemployment situation and its possibilities for the development of the class struggle. The sooner this fact is clearly realized the

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quicker the districts will wake up and really throw the Party forces into the fight.

Let the situation in the Pittsburgh district serve to illustrate the widespread weakness of the unemployment campaign (other districts could be as profitably cited) and also to give an indication of how easily our work can be improved.

The Example of Pittsburgh.

In the Pittsburgh district unemployment conditions are especially terrible, reaching almost a state of famine among the miners, and producing a growing revolt on the part of the workers. But the Party district paid very little attention to it all. It carried out the various phases of the unemployment work in a purely formal manner—a spasmodic fight against evictions, a scattering collection of signatures, a narrow and mechanical united front movement, casual preparations for election of the Washington delegation, and for local hunger marches, little or no actual organization of the unemployed, etc. And even this weak work was confined almost entirely to Pittsburgh proper, the outside towns, with their starving masses of workers, being characteristically neglected.

All in all, it was a program of work entirely inadequate and impossible for our Party in such a situation as the workers now find themselves in.

How readily the work could be strengthened was shown by the action taken by the district a few days

originally there were but three local hunger marches scheduled; that is, two in Pittsburgh proper and one in Ambridge. But, after checking carefully on forces, it was decided that it was quite possible to extend the movement into the surrounding steel and mining towns, and that no less than a dozen additional marches could easily be organized. These, of course, would carry the movement into the most strategic and radicalized sections of the workers.

This broadening out of the campaign will bring with it an intensification of local struggles generally, a mass collection of signatures, an increase in the allotted quota for the Washington delegation, a wide base for a great hunger demonstration on February 10th, and, needless to add, a great strengthening of our Party and the Trade Union Unity League unions.

Extend the Work.

The revised program of the Pittsburgh district on unemployment work amounts to about a fourfold increase in activities. It is entirely within the possibilities of the district and the district officials should be held strictly responsible for its fulfillment. More than that, the various other Party districts should be required to correct and intensify their unemployment programs of work similarly. The work cannot go on as at present if our Party is to come forward as a real leader and fighter. A great extension and intensification of the unemployment campaign is a matter of the most immediate and fundamental im-