Rebuild the Left Wing!

The Main Message of the Recent Plenum - Two Tactics in Trade Union Work - The United Front

By Ben Gitlow

The Plenum of the National Council, held on November 26-27-28, made important decisions of a political and organizational character influencing the future life of our organization. These decisions, particularly the main political resolution which stressed the importance of rebuilding the left wing in the American labor movement, are bound to cause considerable ferment in the Communist and trade union ranks.

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Two Tactics in the Trade Unions

This Plenum followed the meeting of the National Council held immediately after the National Conference of July 4, 1930. It marked the fact that our group has definitely passed the stage of polemizing on abstract theoretical grounds with the champions of the new line in the Comintern and in the CPUSA. The questions raised, the discussions of the concrete tasks in the trade unions, the consideration given to the problems of the united front, showed that our group has already entered the arena of class struggle where the correctness of our policies are being established by their application to the concrete problems facing the working class. In its examination of our work in the trade unions, the Plenum showed how sharply our trade union line clashed with the sectarian line of the official Communist Party. The Plenum also ascertained the fact that thru our activities on a correct line, our influence and following in the trade unions is growing while the official Party was becoming more isolated and more discredited.

The Plenum brought to the fore the fact that our group is no longer simply a manifestation of opposition within the official Communist movement. It proved that our group—the Communist Party of the USA (Majority Group)—is today a recognized Communist force with its independent tasks and with influence in the labor movement that must be reckoned with.

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The Reemergence of the Left Wing

The Plenum took notice of the increasing manifestations of left wing development in the trade unions. Wherever these manifestations appeared it was not accidental that our group should be there to play an important role. This development is to be seen not only in the trade unions but in the fraternal organizations as well. Here the sectarian splitting course of the Party did not succeed in completely liquidating the left wing opposition. In the Workmen's Circle, in the Croation Fraternal Union, in the Hungarian Sick and Death Benefit Society, opposition to the disastrous course of the Party is growing and an organized opposition is crystallizing—against the reactionary forces in these organizations as well as against the official Party policies.

Another feature of this recent development in the labor movement has been the power of our group to serve as a center of attraction for the rising left wing and progressive forces. The *cordon sanitaire* that the Party Party burocrats attempted to establish thru the "enlightenment campaign" has been broken down. The left wing workers and even the Party members no longer take seriously the wild and ridiculous charges of the Party officialdom. Workers seek our advice, accept our policies, and welcome our cooperation. The barriers set up by the official Party in an effort maintain its false line can no longer withstand the pressure of opposition from its own members who are expected to execute the impossible course and from left wing masses who see no hope but only disaster in the Party line as far as their organizations are concerned.

A very striking feature of the Plenum was the importance given to the problem of the left wing in the American labor movement. The official Party and TUUL policies have liquidated the left wing and have left the trade union masses at the mercy of the reactionaries. It took the left wing workers some time to realize the real meaning of the Party's course. But the objective conditions, the economic crisis and the increasing pressure of the bosses upon the workers, are causing deep fermentation in the ranks of the workers. Our agitation on behalf of a policy of unity in the trade unions, of building up a left wing, of fighting inside the mass organizations, is having considerable effect upon this fermentation. But we have not depended upon agitation alone. Wherever possible we have helped to crystallize left wing organizations. In this too considerable success is to be recorded.

The Plenum pointed out that the historical task of rebuilding the left wing has fallen to our group. The Plenum stressed the necessity of recognizing the outstanding characteristic of the present left wing development: that the re-emergence of the left wing is not something brought in to the workers from the outside but that it arises as a natural development out of the conditions which prevail in industry and in the trade unions today.

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Communists and Progressives

The problem of rebuilding of the left wing brought before the Plenum very prominently the whole question of the united front and the relation of forces in the trade union movement. In particular the question of the relationship between the Communists and the progressives came to the fore. The Plenum stressed and reiterated that only a union of all the left wing and progressive forces upon a common program in opposition to the reactionaries and their policies can rebuild the left wing. But we can succeed in this important task only thru a proper application of united front tactics.

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In examining three months of activity the Plenum took note of many forward steps, notably successes in trade union work, the New Workers School, and the Weekly Revolutionary Age. The Revolutionary Age Conferences in Defense of the Labor Press, held in New York and Philadelphia, were noted as a significant stage in the development of mass activity. But the Plenum also gave close attention to the very great shortcomings and errors of our activity and of the present situation of our movement, politically and organizationally. It decisively repudiated the attempt of Comrade Bert Miller to make factional capital against the National Buro of these difficulties, shortcomings and errors and charging the Buro with "sectarianism and factionalism."

The Plenum reviewed the situation of our organization outside of New York and directed the National Buro to pay more and closer attention to this important field of our activities.

The Plenum heard a report on the development of the International Communist Opposition and the coming International Conference. After a discussion, a representative to the International Conference was elected.

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But the outstanding feature of the Plenum was the appeal to the members of our group, to the Party membership and to the workers: *Into the mass organizations! Build the left wing!*

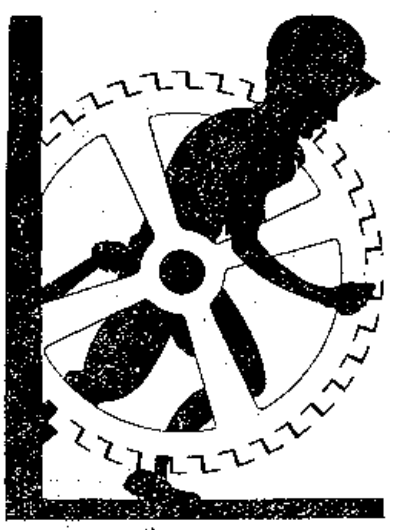
CAPITALISM AND CHILD WELFARE

by Albert Epsen

(Concluded from the last issue)

The fatigue of long hours at exhaustive work is far more injurious to children than to adults. Physiologists say that muscles begin to harden at thirteen. In these years of growth excessive strain may produce permanent injury. Industrial dusts and poisons are more harmful to the children than to the older workers. Moist floors and variation in temperature find children easy victims. And night work is most injurious of all.

A child cannot be as attentive to a machine as an older worker. And the rate of accidents amangst children is very high. In the cotton mills of the South this rate is 48% higher for children of 14 and 15 than for those of 16 and over.



Caught in the Machine!

Industrial Accidents and Children

About half of the states do not record injuries to minors separately and so figures are not available for industrial accidents amongst children. But we gain a painful impression of the situation from the figures of the accidents in Pennsylvania in 1923:

Ten working children under 14 years of age were injured at their work.

Four, less than 16 years of age, were killed at their work.

Eighty-one of that age were permanently disabled at their work.

One hundred and fifty-two suffered amputation because of accidents in their work.

In the face of these sufferings, blighted hopes, broken lives, struggles and frustrations of the boys and girls, Hoover dares to say: "*Theirs is the province of joy and good humor.*"

Labor Protection for Children

The child workers toil for the lowest wages at the lowest grade of work. The cheapness of child labor is well brought out by the yearly per capita wage of child workers which amounted to $175 in 1923 as compared with $1,562 for adult male workers and $837 for female workers. In other words, the child worker gets only one third as much as the grown up male worker. And they are the least protected of the workers. Twelve states exclude from compensation minors who are illegally employed. The child is therefore doubly cursed with hard labor and no protection.

Six states (including the industrial states of Missouri and North Carolina) have no compensation at all.

Paul U. Kellogg, editor of the *Survey*, expressed the difficult position of the child worker very forcefully:

> ". . . . So that maiming the child at work is cheaper than breaking a machine or spoiling a hank of raw materials; when most states with compensation laws base their awards on wages, so that the younger the worker injured the less the employer has to pay . . . and when the states, Pennsylvania, among them, exclude from compensation all children illegally employed, thereby putting a premium on the outlaw employment of under age boys and girls. . . ."

Child Welfare in the USSR

In contrast to the absolutely unprotected condition of child labor in the United States we have the many child labor laws in Soviet Union. In the U. S. S. R. the work of minors under sixteen is prohibited. Special permits may be granted in exceptional cases to minors between 14 and 16. They may not work, however, more than four hours and are compelled to attend factory schools. No minors under fourteen may work without a preliminary medical examination and an annual periodical examination until that age. Minors between sixteen and eighteen are permitted to work six hours. No night work is permitted for minors under eighteen. Minors under eighteen are prohibited from working in a large number of dangerous trades.

The crisis has increased the suffering of the working class children immensely. Already we hear of case of fainting in schools from starvation. If six million are undernourished in "prosperous" times, how many are undernourished now? And the government still limits its aid to research.

The Child in Capitalist Society

There is another phase to the question which must be stressed. That is the attitude of the child to capitalist society. The child may not be aware of the cause for his misery. But he learns to hate bitterly. We know the role the children can play in the struggles of the working class—from a strike to a revolution. It is the task of the Communist movement to win the children to the side of the workers. This can be done by hard and intelligent work.

Senator Beveridge saw clearly the danger to the ruling class coming from the oppressed children. They are words we should never forget: "*Child workers see their inferiority in body, mind and soul, caused not naturally but by their slavery. They are robbed of intellect, health, character, and God's light, and they resent it. They turn into engines of wrath against society and breed the anarchistic spirit.*"

We Must Keep The Weekly!

Here's Good Work

We are now in a position to judge the response of the workers to the weekly Revolutionary Age on the basis of the results in New York and other cities.

In New York the increase by 50% and the increasing demands for the Weekly in the various workers markets indicates that our orientation away from a magazine and towards the development of a mass weekly for workers has proven correct.

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The chief cause for the increases chalked up for all sections in New Yerk is directly due to a systematic organization of our distribution machinery in the sections and the splendid response of our own comrades in participating in numerous committees that went out to sell Ages at local union meetings, forums, debates and workers markets (needle trades, shoe etc.).

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On the basis of results achieved in New York we must urge our comrades everywhere to organize their distribution on this basis. Not forgetting, of course, to continue to develop stand sales.

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AND SUBS TOO!

Another sign of the response from the workers to the Weekly Revolutionary Age is the increasing number of subscriptions which we have received during the last few days, especially from cities where no organizations exist. This indicates that the possibility exists now to build up a large circulation on the basis of sub-

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

There will be a very important article

Two Tactics in the Needle Trades

by Chas. S. Zimmerman.