

For Genuine Militant Unionism!

BY BEN GITLOW

The present policy of the Trade Union Unity League is De Leonism dressed up in a language that is absolutely foreign to the class struggle in the United States; it is De Leonism speaking in terms that are Greek to the millions of American workers. In the ranks of the Communist trade unionists there exists a babel of confusion and even the most loyal supporters of the line of the TUUL in leading positions in the unions cannot carry out the present policies of the TUUL to the satisfaction of the leaders. Self-criticism has been turned into self-abuse; instead of strikes, struggles, the organization of masses, we see lengthy abusive polemics, the continual shouting of empty left phrases which have the effect of lulling the workers to sleep. Instead of Communist work in the existing trade unions to win the masses of the organized workers we witness the establishment, one after the other, according to a blue print, of so-called "revolutionary industrial unions," without masses and without a base in the industry.

Instead of being an organizing center for the left wing the TUUL has been set up as a dual center to the AF of L. But the TUUL does not even function as a trade union center—it functions as a Communist Party. It systematically and mechanically transposes the inner-Party into its own ranks, into the ranks of the unions affiliated with it.

In the TUUL and in the unions affiliated to it there is now going on a campaign to shift the blame for the failures that result from the ultra-De Leonist policies of the TUUL to those who have tried most to execute its policies and decisions. The established leaders must be removed—shout the top bureaucrats. "In spite of their willingness to fight Lovestoneism, they have not freed themselves from the poison of Lovestoneism. Out with the old leaders—is the cry in the TUUL! In this campaign for "new leaders" there occurs all the vituperation and frame-up, all the deliberate lying and slander, all the distortion and the manufacture of facts that has characterized the "enlightenment campaign" in the Party for the last year and that still continues developing new forms of discrediting Communism and wrecking the movement.

Leninism or Losovskyism?

I am sure that, as a result of this article, the Party and the TUUL will launch a campaign of manufactured lies against me, more vicious than ever before. They will certainly not meet the issues raised in this article. The startling "revelations" that will be their answer will come from the pen of such intellectual giants and outstanding proletarian leaders as Sazer, Overgaard, and the Lenin School graduate, Zack; they will make even the Hearst yellow journals and the New York Graphic blush and take notice.

But as Communists, as working class revolutionists, we must face facts squarely and, on the basis of facts, form our conclusions. We must not run away from the truth nor must we build up smoke-screens of lies against it. In this article therefore I will speak plainly of some facts that must be recognized if the Communists are to cease playing with revolutionary phrases and are to deal with facts, if they are to win mass influence in the trade unions and in the working class.

The fruition of Losovsky's long fight against Leninist policies in trade union work can be clearly seen in the results of the work of the TUUL. Lenin continually warned the Communists and stressed this point at the time of the height of the revolutionary wave in Europe—that the Communists must work in the most reactionary trade unions and that it is against the policy of the Bolsheviks to split even the most reactionary trade union organization. As head of the Red International of Labor Unions, Losovsky long fought against this Leninist position on the trade union question. The Comintern repudiated his position continually and more than once rejected his proposals. But with the

inauguration of the Stalin ultra-left factional regime in the CI, there took place a change of attitude of the Comintern to Losovsky's anti-Leninist policies of splitting the trade unions and organizing blue-print revolutionary unions.

This sectarian policy, as a part of the whole sectarian leftist line of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, has given the Communists ten-league boots in running away from the masses! The policy of dividing the working class into two camps—one with the Communists and all others being with the "fascists" or the "social-fascists"—has already made almost complete the isolation of the Communists from the trade union masses.

Havoc in the U. S. A.

In the United States the havoc wrought by this false anti-Leninist Losovsky line is most strikingly seen. With the transformation of the TUUL from a center of the left wing in the existing unions into the TUUL, the work of organizing a left wing in the existing unions, the AF of L and independent unions, was practically abandoned. The TUUL became a caricature dual "revolutionary" trade union center to the AF of L.

Today there is no left wing to speak of in the old unions; whatever groups still remain are being prepared for a split, as e. g., in the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, in the printers union and in the building trades. Whatever rank and file movements develop in the old unions are independent of the Communists and without left wing leadership.

The new unions are in a state of collapse. This is a carefully considered statement.

The National Miners Union is today unable to lead any struggles, it has no membership. At the last Party Plenum it was reported that only 400 miners are paying dues to the NMU today! Yet it is in this union that the expulsion of the Cannon-Trotskyites and of the "Lovestoneites" is being proposed!

The National Textile Workers Union has not led a single struggle for the last year! The Gastonia strike was the last big struggle movement of this union. We must not forget that the Gastonia strike took place when the Lovestone leadership was still at the head of the Party and the Party was praised by the CI as the leader of bitter class battles. The new line finds the stronghold of the union, New Bedford, reduced from a dues paying organization of 4,000 to a few hundred. The outstanding textile leaders, the leaders of the heroic struggles in Passaic, New Bedford, Fall River and Gastonia, have been removed and driven out of the union: Pires, Weisbord, Rubenstein, Dawson, Keller, Vera Buch, and the rest. The big strikes in the South and elsewhere that have taken place have been under AF of L or Musteite leadership and not under the leadership of the NTWU.

The Independent Shoe Workers Union has, under the leadership of the TUUL, suffered a disastrous defeat because of the leftist sectarian policies pursued. Union members are tearing up their union books. An organization of 5,000 built up by a few workers under the Lovestone leadership in the Party has been reduced to a mere handful of approximately 200 workers and that number is disintegrating and breaking up.

In the needle trades the best leaders and workers have been removed. A regime of bossism has been instituted that puts to shame the regimes in the reactionary unions. Democracy in the union is denied. The rank and file is given no avenue of expression. The right wing is making headway while the membership of the union is decreasing and strikes are being lost.

Among the food workers a criminal split of the Amalgamated Food Workers was forced upon the Party members. In this case a left wing union was split. Over 5,000 workers remain with the Amalgamated and approximately 500 workers make up the new paper "indus-

trial union."

The Window Cleaners Union has been lost, a union completely under the leadership of the Communists is now dominated completely by AF of L reactionaries—a tribute to the present policies of the TUUL. The Architectural Iron Workers Union has suffered the same fate.

It is not a happy picture—this situation of the TUUL and the new unions. It is enough to make any Communist ask what is happening to the Party and to the mass organizations. It is a most damning condemnation against the whole crazy sectarian leftist wrecking course of the present Party leadership in the trade unions. A return to Leninism and a complete break with Losovskyism is absolutely necessary to repair the damage wrought. It will take years of painful work under the most difficult circumstances to repair the damage that has been done, to establish the prestige and influence of the Communists among the trade union masses and to build the left wing.

Build the Left Wing!

The present period is one of great opportunities for Communist work in the trade unions. The economic crisis, the growing capitalist reaction, the role of the reactionary trade union bureaucracy, the speed-up, the wage reductions, the severe unemployment and part-time employment are causing wide discontent of the masses of workers, organized and unorganized. This discontent is already finding expression in rank and file movements of rebellion in the trade unions—witness the situation among the miners, the discontent of the workers in the Amalgamated Clothing Workers and in the right wing unions in the needle trades. With 700,000 workers, members of the AF of L unemployed, with 40% of the building trades out of work, only a fool can take the position that the trade union masses, those in the reactionary unions, will remain static and will not move, will not be stirred into action by the unbearable conditions that afflict them. The basis for a left wing exists. The trade union masses are discontented. To follow the present policy of the TUUL is to abandon these workers to the reactionaries, to refuse to give them leadership, to refuse to direct their discontent into conscious struggle against the reactionary trade union officials and against the bosses. It is our duty as Communists to remain in the reactionary unions to organize the struggle against the reac-

tionaries and the bosses, to build the left wing.

The present Party leadership and the leadership of the TUUL refuse to fulfill the tasks that face them. It therefore becomes our duty, our responsibility to the Communist movement in the United States, to build the left wing and to give leadership to the trade union masses.

The basic trade union problem in the United States for Communists is the organization of the unorganized. Only thru building an effective left wing base can this task be accomplished. Only thru a united front tactic on the issue of trade union unity (as was done in Passaic) against the bureaucracy and the bosses can we establish that trade union front of the organized and unorganized masses that will make it possible for us to organize the unorganized into genuine unions under left wing leadership. The present policy of the TUUL makes a such a course impossible. Their policy is to organize simon-pure so-called "revolutionary" unions, everywhere mechanically in a stereotyped fashion. The TUUL policy is De Leonism, doomed to failure and costly to the Communist movement.

We must fight for genuine unions based on the class struggle. The nonsense of the "third period" phantasies in trade union organization must be done away with. We must fight for militant unionism to defend the interests of the workers, for unions that will fight for their everyday needs and for conditions in the shops.

The politicalization of the working class is one of the biggest tasks for the Communists. The Labor Party is a big step in this direction. The TUUL has progressed from cowardice in handling this question at the Cleveland Conference, to the adoption of the resolution for a "Communist" Labor Party, to the logical completion of this policy in a rejection of the Labor Party altogether. We must include the Labor Party as an integral part of the left wing program in the unions.

This is the way out of isolation and ruin. To the trade union masses! Build the left wing! Organize the unorganized! Trade union unity! For a Labor Party! In other words: the tactics of mass work against sectarianism and De Leonism!

If the TUUL will continue to obstinately refuse to change its present disastrous course, then it is up to us as Communists to take the initiative in building the left wing and in winning the trade union masses for the revolution against capitalism!

A Leninist Line in Needle Trades

The following is a section of the declaration just issued by the Minority of the General Executive Board of the Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union. The viewpoint here expressed is in entire agreement with the viewpoint of the Communist Party (Majority Group).

What is our program? What do we propose to do? In the present situation we propose the following policy for our Union:

1. Our main aim in all our work is the strengthening and the building up of the Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union.

The International Ladies Garment Workers Union, the Fur Workers International Union, the Hat, Cap and Millinery Workers International Union are reactionary A. F. of L. unions with company union policies and company union leadership. The same is true of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, altho it is not today in the A. F. of L. The leaderships of these unions work closely with those capitalists who wield the decisive influence in the industry. The "strikes" recently called by the bureaucracy in the needle trades were organized in collusion with the bosses in the industry primarily in order to "stabilize production" (thru intensifying exploitation) and not to improve the economic conditions of the workers.

2. At the present time the reactionary unions have a bigger proportion of the workers than has the NTWIU. However, the ideological hold of the reac-

tionary bureaucracy is not as strong as the membership of the right wing unions while the ideological influence of the NTWIU is much bigger than its own membership and reaches sections of the membership in the reactionary unions. At the present time the hold of the right wing bureaucrats over the membership of their unions is not very firm. In the reactionary unions there is a growing discontent of the workers because of the policies of corruption and betrayal of the bureaucrats.

3. In the present situation great emphasis must be placed upon the task of building and leading a left wing in the reactionary unions. It is now necessary to launch a general campaign to organize and crystallize a left wing in the ILGWU, FWI, HC & MWL, ACW, etc. to serve as a powerful ally in the struggle of the NTWIU.

4. The general program of the left wing in the reactionary unions should be:

- a) Fight for the economic program of the NTWIU!
- b) Fight against the company union leadership and policies!
- c) Fight for the shop delegates system!
- d) Fight for one industrial union in