

Liquidating Loreism In The Needle Trades

By Earl R. Browder

IT will assist our party to more fully absorb the value of our recent experiences in the needle trades, the struggle to liquidate Loreism, if we have a clear idea of the conditions which brot the sharp, open struggle at the precise moment that it did occur. Nothing happens by accident, and it is impossible to understand the particular phenomenon unless one knows something of the forces that brot it about, as well as the conditioning circumstances. Such a knowledge in the case of the needle trades will help to equip our comrades for similar struggles that must occur in other fields and at other times.

Why did the C. E. C. find it necessary openly to take issue in such sharp mannner with the leading comrades in the needle trades left wing in the months of March and April? Granted the harmful deviations (dealt with in some detail in my article in the Workers Monthly for August), why did the struggle against them come to a crisis at this precise moment?

Objective and Subjective Causes of the Crisis.

THE immediate factors that forced the crisis were of two kinds: Objective, that is, the conditions in the industry and the relations of forces between the bosses and the workers

and between the reactionary officials and the workers; and then the subjective, that is, the conditions existing within the ranks of the left wing.

Many comrades of the needle trades have had a long record of deviations and resistance to the leadership of the party. But in the past these differences have been overcome without a headon collision, altho the struggle has been often sharp. This settled tendency to stray away from the revolutionary line of policy, however, early in this year, entered into a period which stimulated it to energetic schemings upon opportunist lines because of the shaking-up going on among the bureaucrats, because of the impending struggle between the officials and the left wing, and because of the crying need for a big battle against the employers to protect the interests of the workers—a tangle of forces which would cheer the heart of every active-minded left-winger for its opportunities for revolutionary advance, but which at the same time stimulated all the illusions of opportunism, the idea that something could be gotten by deals, without a fight. This was the objective basis for the sudden succession of right-wing mistakes that were made in the closing months of 1924 and the first part of 1925, in the needle trades left wing.

Subjective factors also entered here

to cause the sudden emergence of right-wing deviations that resisted the correction of the party. First, there was the inclination already existing among a circle of leading comrades to develop right-wing conceptions and to struggle against the influence of the party. Second, and more decisive in setting the time for this struggle, the needle trades comrades were encouraged to resist the C. E. C. by (a) the factional situation existing in the party which weakened the power of the C. E. C.; (b) the open political support of an organized political group within the party, led by Poyntz, which immediately took the struggle out of the needle trades and made it a general party problem; and (c) the indirect but most effective support given to these right-wing tendencies by the minority comrades who attempted to turn the struggle against the right-wing tendencies into an assault all along the line against the C. E. C. itself.

Here was a combination of forces arrayed against the centralized leadership of the left wing movement which had all the appearances of being very formidable indeed. How were all of these obstacles to be overcome, and the menace of Loreism liquidated in the work of the needle trades left wing?

The Weapons of Criticism and Ideological Struggle.

WHEN the general membership of the party understands the extremely grave situation that was created for the entire movement by this unheard-of combination of forces, they will at the same time understand how necessary was the drastic action that the C. E. C. took. Nothing but a sharp knife wielded with a heavy hand could cut thru this tangle of opportunism and factionalism. Criticism of the sharpest nature and ideological struggle of the most unrelenting sort could liquidate the menace. The C. E. C. applied the weapon.

Before a meeting of garment workers, members of the party in New York, the C. E. C. presented a resolution stigmatizing in harsh words the mistakes of the needle trades comrades. When Comrade Gitlow, of the minority, tried to turn the meeting into an attack upon the C. E. C. instead of helping to correct the needle trades comrades, the C. E. C. promptly placed an official censure upon Comrade Gitlow and called him to order. When, in Chicago, the opportunists within the left wing of the A. C. W. of A., led by Schneid, tried at this same moment to establish their betrayal as the official policy of the left wing group, they were expelled from the party. The entire ideological struggle was taken before the mem-

bership of the party that was directly involved.

Some comrades thot that the C. E. C. acted in a harsh manner. True, the actions were drastic, but the entire future, the integrity of the left wing was at stake. Any hesitation or half-heartedness at that moment on the part of the C. E. C. would have been a disaster, a complete breakdown of our movement. The vast majority of the membership understood this immediately and supported the policy of the C. E. C.

Loreism Is Being Liquidated.

AND out of the struggle has already come this welcome and healthful result: Our movement has been almost completely immunized from the poison of Loreism in its most open forms. The organized combination of forces within the movement which made Loreism a menace is being broken up rapidly. The party membership has been educated to a certain extent, and is being constantly educated further, in the dangerous nature of the opportunistic deviations. The party as a whole is also learning how to combat Loreism effectively. This article is a small contribution to the struggle, the end of which can only be the complete elimination of all groups within the party which fight against the line of the Communist International.