

United Council of Working Class Women Is Initiating Big Movement To End Housing Evils in Metropolis

By JAY LOVESTONE.

Because of the increasing cost of rent, the serious congestion and the do-nothing policy of the government in the acute housing crisis that prevails in New York and other industrial centers of the country, the masses, particularly the women of the working class, have begun to organize themselves to put an end to the present dangerous state of affairs.

Tenants' Associations

No sooner had the United States entered the World War than the landlords launched an organized campaign to raise rents. Soon the rentals became so oppressive that the tenants could no longer bear them.

Many rent strikes were organized by the women of the working class in order to stop the landlords from continuing their exorbitant rentals.

This discontent took on an organized form in various associations of tenants in the different sections of New York. Similar demonstrations were occasioned by the rent situation in other cities of the country.

Typical of such tenant organizations existing in the big cities are the following societies of Greater New York. The Audubon Community Council, the West Harlem Tenants' Association, The Washington Heights Tenants' Association, the Manhattanville Community Council, The Federation of Tenants' Association of Greater New York, the Mount Morris Community Council and Civic Organization, The Tremont Tenants' Civic League, the various Consumers' Leagues, the different Mothers' Leagues, and the United Council of Working Class Women.

Except for the United Council of Working Class Women these organizations are in the main controlled by small business men or local assembly

district politicians of the Democratic and Republican parties or their agents. It was prior to the appointment of the New York State Housing Committee by the Governor in 1920, that the height of tenants' organizations was achieved by the working class in New York. Since then the organization amongst the most hard pressed, the poorest tenants, has been dwindling to insignificance.

The reason for the failure on the part of these tenant organizations to achieve strength is obvious. As soon as the various tenants' leagues stopped their vigorous fight against the landlords and against the government officials who were helping the landlords continue their policy of rule and ruin, the organizations simply died of doing nothing. They atrophied. Their program was based fundamentally on the continuation of the present system of landlord domination of the housing facilities of the country.

The United Council of Working Class Women

Recently there was an attempt made by women in the sections of the city occupied by working class tenants to revive the tenants' organization movement. It was natural for the women to assume the initiative in this field since they are the first to suffer the effects of high rents, poor housing and unsanitary living conditions.

On October 28th, 1923, at the call of the Consumers' League of the Bronx, there was held a conference in the Forward Hall. At this conference there gathered representatives of the Workmen's Tenants' Leagues, the United Hebrew Trades, the Socialist Consumers' League, the Socialist Party, and the Woman's Committee of the Local Workers Party. This conference constituted itself for further action and arranged to call a larger gathering on Dec. 23, 1923.

The December convention was attended by 78 delegates. Amongst the delegations represented were the following: Seven local trade unions, the Joint Board of the Socialist Consumers' League, the Workmen's Tenants' Consumers' League, the Workers Party, the Lithuanian Women's

Progressive Alliance, the committee of action of the Mother's League, the African Blood Brotherhood, and branches of the Socialist Consumers' League.

The conference elected an executive committee consisting of Kate Gitlow, Rose Barron, Mrs. Bourgin, Mrs. Yeshkevitz, Nevin, Citrin, Mintz, Pastor, Sonia Diamond and Mrs. Touroff. Mrs. Kate Gitlow is the secretary-treasurer, and the headquarters of the United Council of Working Class Women—for the protection of working class interests—has its office at 127 University Place. To date 46 working class bodies have endorsed the rent conference and elected a central committee with one representative from such body attending the conference.

Preparation are afoot to have another conference at an early date. Plans are also being developed to organize a big demonstration of working class women against the present unspeakable housing conditions from which the poor are now suffering in New York. Already four successful meetings have been held under the auspices of the Committee of Action.

First Real Mass Movement

The Committee of Action in charge of the work of this body has been given full power to take effective steps to bring together all working class organizations and especially the women of the working class regardless of what political or other organization they are members. A united fight against high rents and houses unfit for habitation is the objective of the organization.

The full significance of the United Council of Working Class Women lies in the fact that this is, practically speaking, the first and the most conscious effort on the part of the mass of tenants to approach the housing problem in a realistic manner. This organization properly views the housing question not as an isolated problem, the solution of which is possible by some peculiar brand of legislation or thru the good favor of some capitalist politician. This organization considers the housing crisis as one of the evils inherent in the whole system of present class

capitalist property relationships. We quote in part from the official program of this League to show its practical character and the redeeming feature distinguishing it from most of its predecessors: "The we know that at present the rent problem is the burning question of the day for the workers and while we carry on the fight for lower rents and better conditions now, we know that the workers in the future also have to face problems from time to time that vitally concern them. There are even more problems to combat at present, especially for the women, such as, better and more schools and playgrounds for the children, the open shop which is of great concern to the working class, and unemployment which is threatening the workers from time to time."

"Therefore in order to carry on an effective struggle at present and to take care of future problems concerning the workers, a united working class is needed."

This Organization Will Grow

The outlook for the future of this organization is good. With such virile constituent bodies as the Consumers' League of the Bronx, the the Consumers' League of Harlem, the Lithuanian Progressive Women's Alliance which alone has a membership of more than 2,000, the Socialist Consumers' League, and the Women's Circle, there is every reason to believe that this organization will grow.

Some of the immediate slogans of the United Council of Working Class Women have already met with a splendid response from the workers in New York. Among the practical proposals put forward by the Council we find a demand for an increase in taxes on costly private homes and apartments and that the city and state administrations build and rent apartments to them at cost in order to relieve the present unbearable housing conditions.

The housing crisis is not limited to New York. Every city and industrial community in the country faces difficulties in securing adequate housing facilities that the working class can afford to pay for. Essentially this problem is the same thruout the

country except only for some variation in form.

What is necessary is a nation-wide organization of strong tenants' leagues of the working class on the basis of a practical program to end the present acute distress.

Mathematicians Get Busy.

DAYTON, Ohio, Feb. 24.—McCook field officials today are awaiting the result of the official calibration of Lieut. John A. MacReady's altitude flight, which terminated yesterday after his altimeter had recorded a height of 41,000 feet.

It is possible but unlikely that the bureau of standards will find an error in the veteran record-maker's favor.

Calibration made by local observers fixed his unofficial height at 34,893 feet. MacReady was out to beat the record of Sadi Lecoq which is 36,745 feet.

The Weather Outlook.

WASHINGTON, Feb. 24. — Weather outlook for February 25 to March 1 inclusive:

Region of Great Lakes: Frequent snow over north and snow or rains over south portion.

Temperature, near normal. much of week.