

The Party's Shortcomings, Mistakes and Problems

NOTE: This is the fourth installment of the report for the Political Committee made by Jay Lovestone, at the recent Fifth National Convention of the Workers (Communist) Party held in New York City. This installment deals with "The Party's Shortcomings, Mistakes and Problems."

WHAT is this problem before us?

The problem before us is two-fold. When we speak of the bourgeoisification of the working class, we speak of the ideological bourgeoisification and material bourgeoisification. Ideologically the whole American working class is backward. If we want to organize a labor Party, we must win the masses in the belly of the Coolidge Party. This does not mean we must become members of it, but the elements of the working class that are today following the Republican and Democratic parties. It is those elements that are ideologically bourgeoisified and whom we must win for a labor party. Only a very small section of our working class has declared its independence ideologically from the bourgeoisie. Insofar as the material side of bourgeoisification is concerned—materially, only a small section of the working class is affected. Materially the upper layer, the skilled, the highly skilled, the labor aristocracy, is affected.

Let us not underestimate this extent of bourgeoisification. This layer consists of several millions of workers who have had experience in organization, who are educated in working class organization, who are largely native elements. Though it is true that the material corruption is limited to several millions, yet the effect of the corruption of these several millions is to be measured not only by the effect on these millions, but by the effect as a result of this on millions and millions of unskilled workers. No one needs underestimate this problem before us. But comrades we must puncture this bubble, this illusion that the bourgeoisie is spreading, the fraud that in America there is no basis for a class struggle, that in America the workers are becoming capitalist.

Examine the claims of the bourgeoisie: They say there are 10,000,000 stockholders in this country. The fact of the matter is that there are only 2,358,000 stockholders in the United States. Let us further examine this figure: 120,000 of these stockholders, or only 5 per cent of them, receive 51 per cent of the dividends, and 1,269,000 or 53½ per cent of the total stockholders receive only 4 per cent of the dividends. Then in addition to this number we have also 100,000 widows and 100,000 students and invalids owning stocks bearing dividends. I have never seen a mass phenomenon of proletarian widows owning stock.

After 35 years of stock selling, the total value of stock sold to the workers is only \$700,000,000. Out of this amount more than half is owned by 269,239 workers. It is true that savings and life insurance have increased. It is true that labor banking has in recent years increased. But, comrades, when we speak of savings accounts, let us not look at it one-sidedly. The very savings accounts of the workers are a weapon

in the hands of the capitalists, they become additional power — they become capital in the hands of the capitalists, more weapons against the working class.

A few words about the standard of living: It is true that the standard of living of the American workers compared to the European workers is much higher. No one can deny that there are specific, objective reasons for this being so. But, comrades, when we speak of the standard of living, and when we compare standards of living, we must not compare the standard of living of the American workers with that of the workers in the European war-torn countries. We must compare the standard of living varying in this country as it does, period by period and insofar as it is a changing standard in this country. We must compare the American worker's standard of living of one period with the standard of living at another period in order to get an understanding of this problem. And in speaking of the "high" American standard of living and savings of the workers we must not lose sight of the fact that in America there is practically no social insurance of any kind. In Europe the employers and their government are compelled to pay at least, in part, for the cost of old age pensions, sickness and unemployment insurance. In the United States the workers are compelled themselves to pay out of their own wages and savings for all these forms of social insurance. Thus, the gap between the wages, savings and standard of living of the American workers and those of the European workers is not as great as the surface indications would show.

Guard Against Wrong Estimate.

TO sum up: we have seen that the ideological bourgeoisification affects the overwhelming majority of the working class. If we do, we will have a wrong estimate of this most important problem. We must remember that in no country in the world is there so great a gap between the labor aristocracy and unskilled workers. The American labor aristocracy is the aristocracy of the labor aristocracy of the world. In no country are the workers used up so rapidly. In no country is exploitation so intense. In no country do workers become old so quickly.

In speaking of the limits of bourgeoisification and the power of imperialism, we must have in mind the international situation. America today is not in the position England was at its height of power. America is not practically alone in the international field. America today is facing increasing challenges from other imperialist powers. We have with us also today the Soviet Union. American imperialism in relation to British imperialism presents to us a problem of antagonisms which have taken the place in international imperialist relations of the pre-war Anglo-German antagonisms. Because of this situation, the period of power of American imperialism, the period of the limited bourgeoisification of our working class, is to be much shorter than the British was.

Wage Figures in This Country.

I WANT to speak about the wage figures of this country. I speak

of it not in the sense of minimizing the extent of bourgeoisification. I speak of the wages in this country merely to puncture another capitalist bubble. The U. S. Department of Labor has just issued a report giving the findings of its investigation of the wage figures. I will not go into the details of these figures, but this investigation (See Monthly Labor Review-August, 1927) clearly establishes that millions of workers in this country, semi-skilled and unskilled and to some extent skilled, receive less than \$25 a week. Keep in mind the fact that even according to the standards set by the anti-working class forces dominating the United States government, a family of five needed a minimum of \$2188 annually in June 1927 to have a fair standard of living. This means a minimum average weekly wage of \$42 to \$45 thruout the year. Even in New York state, the wealthiest state in the Union, according to the findings of the N. Y. State Housing Commission, three out of every four working class families are receiving a total wage which is below the minimum of subsistence level fixed by our bourgeois government.

When we speak of these wages, we discount also unemployment, sickness and other such incidents in industry. These circumstances which are inherent in the capitalist organization of industry would even lower the wage figures given us by the bourgeoisie.

Here we must also speak briefly of the diffusion of wealth, we find that 6 per cent of those gainfully employed own almost 70 per cent of the income-yielding property. 25 per cent of the gainfully employed own 95 per cent, and 63 per cent, or the wage-earners, own only 4.3 per cent of such property. It is true labor banks have increased in number. But in recent months there has been a decrease not only in the number of labor banks, but in total of resources and depositors. The whole system of class collaboration, labor banks, home-owning schemes, "cooperatives" banking schemes are based particularly on this period, the present temporary period of American prosperity.

Such types of bourgeois experts as Carl Snyder, have themselves said that we cannot speak of these class collaboration schemes as permanent phenomena, but only as passing phenomena of a momentary situation—as phenomena which will be in a crisis with the first wave of serious economic depression.

The Engineer's Convention.

SOME comments on the Brotherhood Locomotive Engineering Convention: When this organization which was the father, the leader in labor banking, steps forward and decides to go out of business, and when the man (Johnson), who a year ago held the lowly position of head of the trade union department of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineering, has now become the president of the organization, there are significant developments brewing.

Comrades, we must beware, we must be on guard against these bourgeois influences of pessimism also affecting our own ranks. Pessimism is a danger which our Party faces as a Party, not as individuals, not as groups. Only through a strong ideological campaign against bourgeoisification, only through a strong organizational, practical, anti-bourgeoisifi-

NEW LEADER

Editor, New Leader:

What is news?

On Sunday, the Sacco-Vanzetti funeral is held in Boston, and it is reported on the first page of the New Leader.

On Monday, 25,000 people stand for hours, part of the time in a heavy rain, in Union Square, New York, at a memorial meeting for Sacco and Vanzetti. Mrs. Sacco and members of the Boston Sacco-Vanzetti Defence Committee are present. There is not one line about it in the New Leader.

Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday the death masks of Sacco and Vanzetti are on view at the Stuyvesant Casino, also in New York, and not less than 100,000 people pass in a steady stream through the hall to pay their last respects to their death comrades. Not a word about it in the New Leader.

My astonishment at this strange Socialist Party evaluation of what is news should, I suppose, have been lessened by the previous action of the Party's executive secretary, in regard to the memorial plans. I called on August Claessens Friday to enlist the Party's cooperation. I showed him credentials issued by the Sacco-Van-

cation campaign, can we avoid the dangers of pessimism for our Party, can we also make forward steps in the face of difficulties.

We must not only have an ideological campaign, but also a practical organizational campaign to meet this danger. We must have a much stronger labor party campaign. One of the most powerful weapons to overcome the ideological bourgeoisification of our workers is to be found in the movement for a labor party. We must strengthen our own Party above all. The insurance against this toxin, this bacillus of bourgeoisification in the ranks of the proletariat, is in the strength of the Communist Party. We must struggle against the trade union bureaucracy. We must build militant unions. We must fight

which he attentively examined. In Sunday's Times he was quoted to the effect that the Memorial Committee, which I represent, was "self appointed" and that the memorial demonstration "had been repudiated" by the Boston Committee. This was of course untrue.

What, Mr. Editor, is news?

And what is sabotage?

Sincerely yours,—Clarina Michelson
Sacco-Vanzetti Memorial Committee,
22 Bank Street, N. Y. C.

P. S. I am sending a copy of this letter to the labor press—not, however, to the Times or the other capitalist papers.

On CMTC Deaths.

Editor, The DAILY WORKER:

I noticed in the morning World a dispatch on the far famed and self-advertised "opposite the editorial" page. It announced with joy that almost 40,000 men had trained in CMTC camps during the summer and that only three had died. Also that the rate was lower than that of other years.

Truly a grim capitalist joke! To deny their dupes the peculiar joy of dying on a battlefield.—Emanuel Finkel.

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energetically for social insurance to be paid for by the capitalists and administered by the workers. We must expose the capitalist government as a strike-breaking agency, as an imperialist clique. We must show the role of the labor banks. We must separate these institutions from the trade unions. We must fight these capitalist institutions. But wherever the conditions demand specifically for agitation purposes, we must throw out the slogan for changing such institutions into genuine cooperative institutions.

The development of a genuine cooperative movement in this country affords us a very powerful weapon against the bourgeoisification propaganda and efforts of the capitalist class. (To be Continued)

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