

1927 Was a Year of Warfare Against Workers --- Report of Jay Lovestone

SIXTH INSTALLMENT.

(Continued from Saturday's DAILY WORKER).

"Let us take the year 1927 and merely enumerate the outstanding events in the labor movement in this year. We will find first, the war of the corrupt bureaucrats on the Communists and the left wing in the needle trades. Second: the same war in the UMWA and the robbing of the progressives who were elected to the leading offices in the union. Third: the new wage policy and union-management co-operation schemes. Fourth, the U. S. supreme court decision in the Bedford stone cutters' case.

"5. The sweeping injunction wave.

"6. The crushing blows dealt the United Mine Workers of America.

"7. The increasing signs of resistance to attack shown by the workers in Pennsylvania, in Ohio, in the needle trades, in Colorado.

"Now the significance of these defeats is inestimable for us and for the working class. We had here, particularly in the United Mine Workers of America, a crass example of what the treacherous policies of the bureaucracy will bring any labor organization. We have been having in the United Mine Workers disruption, crises, yes almost collapse of the United Mine Workers, the removal of the proletarian backbone of the labor movement, the removal of the great reservoir of militancy in the A. F. of L. The defeat of the miners, if it becomes final and decisive, will be a major disaster for the whole labor movement. Here we have the key to the acute crisis in the trade unions.

"The severe economic recession, the increasing challenge to American imperialism are the basic factors causing the bourgeoisie to bring greater

pressure to bear on the working class. These forces sharpen the attack of the bourgeoisie. Add to these the ravages wrought in the ranks of the labor movement by the disastrous reactionary policies of the bureaucracy and you will be able to understand why it is that in 1919 the United Mine Workers' Union was able to tie-up a minimum of 70 per cent of coal production and today is able to tie-up a maximum of 17 per cent.

"The American capitalists have always been hostile to trade unionism. The bigger the capital the greater the hostility. General Motors would consider it a huge concession to give its workers even a company union. The bourgeoisie today, as a class, are out to destroy the trade unions as determinant force in wage standards and working conditions.

"In the present period of imperialism all workers' organizations, especially those of a mass character, are picked for destruction by the bourgeoisie. But we should keep in mind the fact that the swing of the official labor movement to the right does not mean that the whole labor movement is a labor movement of the aristocracy and is hopelessly reactionary. That would be wrong. The relative importance of the labor aristocracy today is decreasing.

"A few words about class collaboration. Class collaboration has not disappeared and will probably be with us for some time. But class collaboration has been shaken to its foundations by recent developments. The very increasing challenge to American imperialism bringing in its wake more competition, decreasing the capacity of the American bourgeoisie to bribe the labor aristocracy, the economic depression, are undermining class collaboration. Besides it is not necessary for the bourgeoisie to resort to class

collaboration methods of a certain character at this time because the job of weakening the labor unions has been done already to a large extent. The workers' organizations have been considerably undermined. Then there are subjective factors, like the collapse of the class collaboration schemes, the labor banking in the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers. This is a powerful force making for the disillusionment of the masses with class collaboration on an increasing scale. But though weakened class collaboration may even in this very period of depression assume new forms, we must, therefore, be on guard to fight it as energetically as ever.

"What effect does the economic recession have on the labor movement? Insofar as the bureaucracy is concerned they are going to continue their role of being agents for the biggest bourgeois group. Green's New Year letter is a classic specimen of what the bureaucracy does for imperialism. However, the further down we go in the ranks of the bureaucracy the deeper will be the differences. These differences the Party must utilize, but we must not base our policies on these differences. Our policies are based on the masses and on the objective conditions in the country.

"Insofar as the socialist party is concerned, though some of the leaders may be slightly critical of the proposed Woll anti-strike law, as the New Leader editorial today indicates, still they will not fight it, and if given certain half-hearted promises and 'guarantees' the outlook is that they will endorse it.

"The progressive elements. We should not have a static concept of progressives. We must distinguish between progressive leaders and their followers, the progressive masses.

"But the progressive elements are

of vital importance to us in the development of the left wing thru serving as one of the important factors for the development of the left wing.

"Our Party must base its policies on the masses and the objective conditions. The smashing of the unions, the smashing of the workers' standards of living, the increasing speed-up and wage-cuts, the lengthened hours, give our Party an opportunity to engage actively and in a leading capacity in the mass struggles. The more the bureaucracy goes to the right; the more the struggles of the working class are for the very basic, fundamental rights; the more the masses will be thrown into struggles; the greater the masses participating in such battles; the greater the opportunities for our Party to lead in these struggles.

Imperialism and the American Working Class.

"I don't want to go into the details involving the basic effects of American imperialism on the working class. Suffice it to say that the capitalist propaganda that the American working class as a class is bourgeoisified materially, doesn't stand up as much as many of us might suspect on the basis of insufficient evidence. The fact of the matter is that there are no more than about 2½ million stockholders. The bourgeoisie have told us there are fifteen million stockholders in this country. 96 per cent of the stock dividends go to those stockholders who are not members of the working class.

"Insofar as wages are concerned, the myth of high wages has recently been exploded by the department of labor findings and the findings of other experts indicating that at least sixteen million workers in this coun-

try do not earn annually an average weekly wage of \$25.

"The workers' savings have increased, but these are not necessarily capital for the workers. In the hands of the powerful finance capitalists dominating the whole economic system these savings become forces of increasing power for the bourgeoisie.

"It is true also that in America we do not have the extensive system of social insurance that is to be found in some of the European countries. This system is paid for largely by the employers and government. Consequently a portion of the savings of the workers goes towards the payment of social insurance.

"Let us admit even that the standard of living of the American working class is higher than the standard of living in any other working class in the world. But it is not enough for us to compare it with the standard of another working class, say one in war-torn European capitalist countries. We must compare the trend of the standard of living within this country itself. We further find that in speaking of standards of living we should not speak of it as one common standard for the working class as a whole. The labor aristocracy has primarily benefited from the standard of living rise. Examine the wages of the miners and you will find a consistent decline.

"Furthermore, we must admit that the American labor aristocracy is the labor aristocracy within the labor aristocracy of the world's labor movement. But in no country in the world is the gap between the labor aristocracy and the great mass of semi-skilled and unskilled workers so big. In no other country in the world is exploitation so intense; in no country in the world do the workers get used up so quickly. Accepting the fact that

there are tremendous forces making for the material bourgeoisification of large sections of the working class we must also view the counter-tendency forces making for the proletarianization of increasing sections of the working class, the continued expropriation of the great mass of the population of the country. The ex-

propriation of the farmers, the drawing of women and youth into industry, the proletarianization of the Negroes, the expropriation of the petty-bourgeoisie—these are among the forces markedly counteracting the trend towards the bourgeoisification of the American working class."

(To Be Continued).



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