
March 6 in Detroit

by William Miller

Published in *Revolutionary Age* [New York], vol. 1, no. 12 (April 21, 1930), pg. 10.

The first lesson of Leninism is that under all circumstances there must be made an estimate of conditions and events *as they are*. Bluff and exaggeration lead to demoralization and defeat of the working class movement. The unemployment demonstration held on March 6 [1930] in Detroit is an example in point.

First as to some technical questions. The demonstration was called on one of the smallest squares in the heart of the downtown district. A thousand workers fill the square. The very location of this small square, as every worker could see, put everything in favor of the police and make it difficult to carry out any objective. The capitalist papers saw this and commented upon it. From every viewpoint the choice of a place for the demonstration was very bad especially as much better places (Grand Circus Park, Madison Square, and Second Boulevard Park) were available!

Now as to the demonstration itself. It was very poorly organized. It was leaderless and no real effort was made to speak to the workers. Among those few who did dare to do something and were arrested, the leaders were conspicuously absent, especially the “revolutionary” gold brick salesman, Jack Stachel who, by the way, went into hiding two days before March 6 upon the rumor that the city detectives were looking for him. Somehow this future “Lenin of America” “convinced” the membership that they could not afford to take a chance of his being arrested!

After it was all over and finding it was safe to come out of his hiding hole, the coward and faker, Jack Stachel, who hastily gathered what information he could from his reporters and the afternoon press, sent that same afternoon to the *Daily Worker* a telegram full of exaggerations, bluff, and bombast about the demonstration. He neither saw nor took part in the demonstration at all!

Following is the wire sent to the *Daily Worker*:

Over 100,000 workers, including thousands from the automobile factories and other shops, answered the call of the Communist Party to demonstrate today on World Unemployment Day — the demonstration reached its height at 1 o'clock, when 25,000 workers succeeded in gathering

in Campus Martius. Hundreds of banners were displayed and speakers began to address the workers.

The facts are that about 75,000 were on the streets, of this number about 30,000 were workers who responded to the call and the other 45,000 were people from the downtown stores and office buildings let out for lunch hour. As to “including thousands” from the automobile factories and other shops, this is the biggest bluff and fake that no one but the super-salesman, Jack Stachel, would try to get away with it, but that is the new line! From the facts that we could gather practically every comrade who had a job was working on that day, in spite of the general strike call. The question was raised later in the Party what to do with those who did not obey the order to quit work on that day. As to thousands of workers quitting their jobs on that date for the purpose of demonstrating, as the report tries to imply, this is a fake dished out for obvious purposes. Workers know that to lay off for such an occasion with mass unemployment and thousands ready to take their jobs would mean getting fired immediately. Most of the factories warned their employees about laying off on March 6 and in some of the places they issued special passes to the workers on that date to be better able to check up on those who dared to lay off.

As to the 25,000 being present in Campus Martius Square, this is just so much tommyrot. At no time during the demonstration was so much as a handful of workers allowed to approach this square.

There was no such thing as hundreds of banners displayed. A few placards were displayed for a moment or two, being destroyed by police or hid under their coats again.

How could anyone address the workers? There were no platforms or soap boxes of any kind to be seen. Surely there weren't any on Campus Martius as no one was allowed to approach it. “There were a number of isolated disturbances as the agitators went toward the park. Several climbed poles and tried to make speeches, others would rush out from the walks and display placards to the occupants of buses. Mounted police invariably succeeded in quieting these outbursts.” (Detroit *Free Press*, March 7, 1930.)

As a protest from the unemployed workers, it was splendid. But as an organized demonstration it was a fiasco. There was no leadership given in the whole affair. It was called for in a place which was obvious to anyone that it was impossible to hold a demonstration of any proportion. Not one of the leaders tried to address the workers; while the chief faker, Jack Stachel, went into hiding.

Edited by Tim Davenport

1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR · November 2011 · Non-commercial reproduction permitted.