

# What About Paterson?

by Jay Lovestone

It is still too early to evaluate the full significance of the strike of seven thousand textile workers in Paterson.

The struggle, now entering its sixth week, has extraordinary importance because of the special conditions under which it is being fought. Today, we are in the midst of the most severe and far-reaching economic crisis the United States has yet experienced. At this writing, the wage-cutting drive of the employers is assuming such dimensions as to make it, in every likelihood, the most dangerous assault on the standards and conditions of the workers in many years. The wage-cuts ordered by the Paterson textile bosses are part and parcel of the general concerted campaign of wage-reductions instituted by the bosses throughout the country.

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## Potentialities of the Strike

If we can build an effective mass struggle here, if we can rally general labor support for the textile strikers, then a determined, successful fight in Paterson can become the first battle in a general campaign of resistance of labor against the present country-wide attacks of the capitalists and their government on the working class. It is entirely possible so to develop the Paterson strike as to have it play the role in this crisis that the heroic and victorious struggles of the textile workers played in the 1921 crisis. We must repeat the history of ten years ago when the textile workers in the Pawtucket and Blackstone Valleys and in Lawrence, thru the very tenacity and determination of their struggle, administered the first important setback to the bosses in their anti-labor drive.

What has happened so far? It is of no mean importance that the A. F. of L. Executive Council was forced to hold off (for the present) denouncing this strike. The mass response to the strike call of the A. F. of L. amalgamated unions has been such as to compel this coterie of reactionary labor bureaucrats even to give the strike a sort of half-hearted endorsement. No doubt, the desperate plight into which the entire American trade union movement is day by day being driven further and further caused the Executive Council of the A. F. of L. to make this endorsement move—the first of its kind since the notorious Hoover-Green "No-Strike Pact". This is the first strike of any importance waged by the A. F. of L. unions in many months which Green has at least outwardly and temporarily not denounced and to which he has even pledged support.

It is fortunate that such a coming to grips with the employing class should come in Paterson, so rich in splendid labor traditions, so renowned for militant working class resistance to capitalist exploitation and tyranny. The young workers in the present struggle will certainly live up to the inspiring working class traditions of their brothers, fellow-workers and comrades ten, fifteen and more years ago.

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## Chaos and the Left Wing

There was a time in the left wing movement when what has happened in Paterson to date would have been hailed as great progress. Let us say in 1921 during the textile strikes. If we had then had amalgamation of some unions, if thousands of workers had gone out on strike, if militant picket demonstration and mass parades had been organized among the workers in the American Federation of Labor unions, how much praise would have been showered on such militancy by the left wing movement!

There can be no better and more powerful proof of the degeneration and disruption of the left wing movement today than the fact that so influential a section of it as the official Communist Party and the Trade Union Unity League, has done nothing else but denounce and resent such splendid forward steps of thousands of textile workers in Paterson.

We are confident that the great mass of workers in Paterson, textile workers and other workers, will understand this reaction of the T.U.U.L. as one of confusion, misleadership and self-deception. We can only say to the T.U.U.L. that merely styling oneself "left," yelling revolutionary phrases, or slinging mud does not make one a left winger. It is militant action against the bosses and not noise and abuse against striking workers that makes one a left winger.

It is in this strike that the sectarian tactics of the Party's new trade union line are appearing in full bloom, even more clearly than in previous struggles in other fields. Hence, for us there is a real opportunity at hand here. It took us years to wipe out a certain malodorous reputation with which Communists had been afflicted in the trade union movement—the reputation of being irresponsible and disruptive. It took us years to build up confidence amongst an appreciable number of workers, particularly in the trade union movement, to the effect that Communists are constructive, responsible, are builders and not destroyers of labor organizations.

In this strike, as in all struggles in which the Communist Party and Trade Union Unity League have participated within the last two years, the workers have been given every reason to conclude that the Communists now pursue an irresponsible, destructive line. But with our group, so deeply involved in the Paterson strike, openly and energetically coming forward in

every activity and struggle of the strikers, we have the chance of showing the workers, in practice, in everyday work, what the vanguard of the working class really is.

We have a chance to show that the vanguard of the working class is not a collection of self-appointed individuals who believe or call themselves "saviors of the working class," but is an organization of those workers who actively show in devotion, in sacrifice, in example, in coming forward on the picket lines, in strike committees, that they are worthy of confidence and leadership.

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## Communists and Communists

In this strike we have an opportunity to show to the great masses of workers that there are Communists and Communists, that there are Communists with false tactics and Communists with correct tactics. By energetic carrying out of our trade union policy we can make it clear to thousands of workers what the Communist movement really stands and fights for.

In the Paterson strike we have reached what is so far the most advanced stage of our struggle with the Party bureaucracy over their sectarian tactical line. First, we had to utilize (as we still must) every opportunity to differentiate ourselves from ultra-leftism, to clarify the issues in the Party ranks, primarily thru discussion. From this we advanced to the struggle in the mass organizations for the adoption of correct policies, for the rejection of ultra-left policies by those mass organizations. Now we are in a position where we can, thru experience, in action, convince great masses of workers of the correctness of our policies on the field of actual struggle against the exploiters. Here we appear not only negatively but positively and concretely. Here we have a chance to deal crushing blows to sectarianism, to adventurism, to union splitting. In this fashion we can win the support of Communist Party members and sympathizers, and can interest and win for Communism and our Communist position great masses of workers. That accounts for the disruptive, desperate and reckless methods of the official Party bureaucracy in its struggle against us in Paterson. It is in Paterson that the Party leadership has reached the lowest level in its entire fight against us.

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## Our Tasks

What are the tasks of our group in the strike? First of all, this is not a strike for Communism or the proletarian dictatorship. Nor is this a strike for the R.I.L.C. program which advocates the proletarian dictatorship. The Paterson struggle is an elementary strike, defensive in character,

against wage-cuts and for decent working conditions. The struggle is being waged on the broadest basis that any Paterson strike has had in years. This is particularly important because it comes at a time when practically the entire labor movement is paralyzed and disunited.

As Communists we have some simple jobs here. We must fight actively and in the spirit of great self-sacrifice for the demands of the strikers, for the interests of the workers, for the building of the union. Our members should set the example to all workers by being in the front ranks of all picketing and mass demonstrations. Nothing should be left undone by our organization to arouse the sentiment and support of all workers for the Paterson textile strike. We must go but of our way to counteract the crippling effect of any hesitancy, vacillation and confusion which may creep into the ranks of the strike leadership. Our comrades and supporters should combat such manifestations not with insults and abuse, as the official Communist Party leadership does, but rather in a critical, positive and constructive manner always indicating specifically what should be done as well as what should not be done. We cannot work hard enough to infuse militancy and fighting spirit in the strikers ranks.

In the campaign for relief we must leave no resources untouched. We must be careful to avoid the costly mistake of the ultra-left sectarians dominating the National Textile Workers Union, who have transformed the whole struggle into one of charitable relief. The relief machinery is a supplementary, auxiliary machinery, is an important section of the fighting front of the textile strikers.

It is thru such constructive actions that we can strengthen the lines of the strikers, that we can help build a mass union, that we can lay the basis for developing a powerful left wing group in the ranks of the workers. This is the best guarantee for a full victory of the workers.

Thru popularization of the correct Communist tactics, thru acquainting thousands of workers with what we, as Communists, stand for, the Communist Party (Majority Group) can come out of this strike not only with enhanced prestige but also with the knowledge that it has served as an inspiring, unifying and driving force in one of the most important struggles of the American labor movement.

The comrades must rally full force to the support of the Paterson strikers so that the strike will turn out to be a victory not only for the textile workers but for the entire working class, now in its most critical position in many a year.

# THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IN INDIA

by S. K. Vidyarthi

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Communists as the condition *sine qua non*. Completely out-manoeuvred, the Communists planned to convene a session of the Trade Union Congress. This would have completed their isolation and handed the movement back completely to the reformists. But the Trade Union Congress could not meet, for the simple reason that it existed only in name, having practically no bona fide union affiliates.

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## The Communist Opposition Begins Work

At this juncture, a new factor asserted itself in the movement. It has since succeeded in checking the offensive of the reformists, in re-establishing Communist influence in the trade union movement, and in laying the foundation for a united Trade Union Congress on the platform of class struggle. The new factor represents the Communists who reject the bankrupt ultra-left sectarianism and make for a functioning Communist Party so urgently needed in the present situation of a maturing revolutionary crisis. The rising movement is for the present known as the "Roy Group" in contradistinction to the decimated sect of the ultra-left adventurers.

Already a year ago our group took up the reconstruction of the Bombay Red Flag Union, from the leadership of which the official Communists had been driven out by the workers themselves. In the course of a few months the union somewhat recovered its position. In the name of the resurrected Red Flag Union, our group captured the initiative in the campaign for trade union unity. In a manifesto, the desire for unity expressed from various sides was supported but it was pointed out that unity would never be realized so long as it remained a vague conception. A concrete platform of unity was formulated. The manifesto, maintained that unity was possible on the rejection of right reformism and left-sectarianism. Having laid down the principle that the trade union is an organ of class struggle and as such can never have for its object the reconciliation of capital and labor, the platform contained a detailed program of immediate action. Immediate demands of the workers were clearly formulated. A ceaseless militant struggle for enforcing these demands was maintained to be the function of the trade union. The platform disapproved of sending delegates to Geneva or of affiliation with Amsterdam. Finally the suggestion was made that the proposed

session of the Trade Union Congress should be postponed, pending an energetic campaign for unity. Nine unions of Bombay instantly endorsed the platform of unity. A committee was set up to conduct the campaign. Feeling themselves in a hopeless minority, the official Communists quietly dropped the plan of calling the Trade Union Congress and declared that relentless war upon the "Roy Group" was "the supreme revolutionary task of the moment." They did go about this "supreme revolutionary task" in right earnest. For "destroying these enemies of the C. I." they were ready to use any means including denunciation to the police, which they actually did, and did not make a secret of it! Still the rise of our group could not be stopped even by the discrediting of the "royal followers of the C. I." The "renegades" are destined to save Communism in India as well as in other countries, in spite of the 100% loyalites. "The enemies of the C. I." will re-establish the prestige of the C. I.

(continued in the next issue)

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