

LABOR IN THE FAR EAST (JAPAN)

By TANI

EDITOR'S NOTE:—Yesterday we told of the split forced by the reformists in the Japanese General Federation of Labor and of the program of action of the left wing body, the Japan Labor Union Council or, Nihon Rodokumia Hyogikai, whose general policy is one of class struggle instead of class collaboration, such as the leaders advise in the reformist federation. Today we read of the manner the Japanese left wing handles the pressing problem of unemployment.

ARTICLE II

National League of Unemployed.

MAN must not be judged by his words, but by his deeds. So we are more concerned with the actual deeds of the Japanese left wingers than with what they say in their declarations. Among the activities of the Nihon Rodokumiai Hyogikai, since its formation, there are two which are most worthy of close attention. They are the activities aiming at the organization of the National League of Unemployed and the organization of the Proletarian Party.

The terrible state of unemployment in Japan is alarming even the most indifferent sections of society and hysterical cries are heard everywhere. For instance, the Japan Advertiser (June 22, 1925), which is a semi-official organ of the Japanese bourgeois government for foreign propaganda, is forced to admit the critical condition of the country in an article entitled "Japan's Depression Worst in History."

In part it says: "With an army of unemployed of considerably more than 2,000,000 during the last year in Japan, swelled constantly by numbers who have been thrown out of work during the first six months of 1925,

and aggravated by labor disputes, the present period is said to be the worst nation-wide depression that this country has yet experienced, according to a statement issued by the social work bureau of the department of home affairs yesterday. A radical movement such as has never before been felt in Japan is expected to result from the constant wrangling between labor and capital and the prolonged unemployment."

THIS is rather a bold admittance of fact on the part of the bourgeois organ. Under such circumstances the leaders of the trade unions were for some time feeling the necessity of organizing the unemployed on a national scale, but owing to the so-called "internal trouble," which finally split the General Federation of Labor, they were not able to take concerted action on even such a grave and common problem as unemployment. The initiative for organizing the unemployed on a national scale, however, was taken by the left wing leaders in July, soon after the conclusion of the "internal trouble."

On July 7, the eastern section of the aforementioned Hyogikai (Tokio) elected a "Committee of Action Against Unemployment" and started to work out a wide-scale project for agitation and organization against unemployment. At the mass meeting held on July 18 in Tokio under the auspices of the Hyogikai a resolution to organize a "National League of Unemployed" was unanimously passed.

Following this first successful meeting on the problem of unemployment, 12 similar mass meetings were held in various quarters of Tokio and its vicinity within three weeks, all under the auspices of the Hyogikai.

MEANWHILE, at the executive meeting of the said Hyogikai held on July 27, the Committee of Action against Unemployment was made a

permanent organ and at the same time the execution of actual work on the organization of unemployed, such as the registration of unemployed, negotiation with other labor organizations, etc., were started.

The unemployment movement in Osaka (Osaka is the largest industrial center of Japan, while Tokio is the political center), under the auspices of the Hyogikai, started on July 10 with the broadcasting of leaflets and placarding. On the 12th a mass meeting was held in the city park. On the following day the Osaka branch of the Hyogikai invited all the local trade unions as well as the Japan Peasant Union for a "conference on unemployment problems." On July 20, answering the call of the Hyogikai, 71 delegates representing 27 different labor organizations met and agreed unanimously to carry on the movement against unemployment and to establish a permanent organ for the purpose.

IT is significant that to this memorable conference the Japanese Federation of Labor did not send its representatives. Since the recent split, the federation has entirely been subjected under the control of the reformist bureaucrats, who, from their hatred of left wingers, have been obstructing all the attempts in which the latter are active.

At the conference, great indignation was expressed by some of the delegates at the non-attendance of the Japanese Federation of Labor, but at the suggestion of the Hyogikai and peasant representatives a delegation was elected to induce the federation to co-operate. The delegation succeeded and at the second meeting of the committee on July 26, the representatives of the federation were present.

At that meeting several committees of action were elected and actual work



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for agitation and organization among the unemployed were assigned to each. Thus the movement against unemployment in the great industrial centers of Japan initiated by the left wingers has successfully united all the local labor organizations regardless of their political tendencies.

IN another industrial center in western Japan, Kobe, the unemployment movement, initiated by the Nihon Rodokumiai Hyogikai, was started July 22. On that day the city was placarded with various posters bearing slogans against unemployment and the offensive of capital. On the 24th a mass meeting was held in the largest meeting hall in the city. On

the 25th a permanent local committee on unemployment was elected.

Similar attempts by the left wing elements in the trade union have also been made in other industrial centers and similar results have been arrived at. It is erroneous to suppose, however, that all these attempts have been carried on smoothly. On the contrary every forward step taken by left wing organizations has met with obstacles laid by reformists and with suppression by the government.

Arrests and bloodshed are usual occurrences at mass meetings. Often the speakers are not allowed to speak more than a few opening words before they are pulled down from the platform by armed police. However, the brutal measures of suppression exercised by police and the gendarmerie are serving as oil on fire. The revolutionary leaders of Japan are finding unexpected promoters of their agitational work in the very suppression by the police administration.

SO far the writer has not received information as to the completion of the organization of the National League of Unemployed; or the opening of the National Congress of Unemployed, which is the immediate aim of the unemployment movement so energetically started by the Hyogikai. But it is simply a matter of time.

There are yet two points to be remembered in observing the future development of this unemployment movement of the left wingers. At the Osaka conference held July 26, it was decided that "the movement shall not concern itself with the work bearing a character of mutual aid, but it shall be a protest movement against the government and other sources on the question of unemployment." This statement clearly indicates the character of the movement as a political movement, fundamentally differing from the movement of reformists.

ANOTHER point to be remembered is the dual purpose of the movement, which its promoters are thinking to attain. The All-Japan Federation of Labor, that is, the national unity of labor, has had no opportunity of realization since its first abort in 1922. The failure was partly due to the failure on the part of the leaders to base the unity movement on concrete and practical problems.

This mistake has lately been acknowledged by the left wing leaders and the unemployment movement has at once been grasped by them for the basis for the national unity of the trade union movement. This is why the present unemployment movement started by the Hyogikai is so important and needs close attention.

Proletarian Party.

IN Japan there is no "workers' party" nor any party legally representing the interests of non-propertied classes at the present. (Since this was written The Proletarian or Labor Party has been formed early in December.—Editor DAILY WORKER.) The cry for a "Proletarian Party", however, has become loud since a year before last, when the extension of franchise became evident. This year in May the so-called "universal suffrage" (a manhood suffrage with many limitations) was passed through the diet and the number of voters for parliamentary elections was increased from 3,000,000 to 12,000,000.

The new political factor thus created is already becoming the object of exploitation by bourgeois politicians on the one hand and on the other has become the basis of a new political force of the oppressed class. The bourgeoisie, who have still to fight against feudalistic aristocracy and landlordism, want to exploit the new political factor for the warfare against their internal enemies.

For this purpose they are giving or-

ders to their reformist lackeys to organize the new voters into an illusory social-democratic party. Against such a danger and betrayal, the left wing leaders in the trade union movement are striving to organize the new political elements into a "proletarian party" on the basis of class distinction.

LATE last year preliminary work for the practical organization of a "Workers' and Peasants' Party" were started by Communist elements within the labor organizations. Particularly in the Japanese Federation of Labor the work was going on with definite results, until the so-called "internal trouble" put a temporary check upon it.

During and after the split, the center of the organizational work of the political party has shifted from the Federation to the Japan Peasants' Union and to the newly organized Nihon Rodokumiai Hyogikai.

The reformist leaders of the federation, now being free to exercise their will after the expulsion of communists, have consciously attempted to lead the party movement into chaos, thereby to a sabotage of the interests of the working masses. Instead of one national party of workers and peasants, which up to recently they advocated, they have begun to authorize the formation of local independent parties.

Thus, under the tacit guidance of the political committee of the Japanese Federation of Labor, several small local parties have already sprung up in different parts of the country. As a matter of course, these mushroom parties are of no great force, but their appearance at the critical moment of the founding of a national party is certainly an obstacle and an active sabotage on the part of the reformists against the coming "Proletarian Party."

(To be continued in next issue.)