

Some Basic Questions Answered

by Ben Gitlow

The developing rift in the Socialist Party between the Stanley or "Militant" group and the right wing bureaucracy, which terms itself "Marxist", is bringing to the fore in the S. P. a discussion involving an estimation of historical events, and a consideration of fundamental problems before the labor movement. The "Militant" group represents the growing leftward trend within the ranks of the Socialist Party. In spite of its indecisiveness, confusion, lack of clarity and uncertainty as to its future, the appearance of this group is a welcome sign. It is a sign of the beginnings of a leftward stirring in the ranks of the working class. Communists cannot ignore this development in the ranks of the S. P. It is too important a manifestation. At bottom it is a result of the effects of the present economic and political situation upon the working class. That the economic crisis plays an important role in the controversy is recognized by Stanley, speaking for the "Militants" and by O'neal for his self-styled "Marxists". Stanley, in the *New Leader* of January 17, 1931, states:

"It is not an accident that their (Militants') existence coincides with the depression of 1929-1930. The economic crisis exposed the weakness of the Party in handling such fundamental problems like unemployment. The Militants simply expressed the dissatisfaction of comrades with the drift in the Party's activities and policies."

O'neal, in the *New Leader* of Jan. 24, puts it this way:

"The prostration of capitalism has brought a wide sense of economic grievance to the workingclass and it has been interesting and encouraging to observe comrades turning to working class issues."

It is clear from the above two quotations, coming as they do from opposite poles in the Socialist Party, that the economic crisis is seriously affecting the membership of the Socialist Party, as it is indeed affecting the membership of the trade unions and the working class as a whole.

As Communists we must reject the estimation of the *Daily Worker*, that the leftward movement in the Socialist Party is a conspiracy to fool the workers. Such brave, bold words analyze nothing, explain nothing and convince no one. Such nonsensical verbiage has no place in Marxian analysis.

The proletarian revolution in Russia, the post-war revolutionary situation in Europe and the trenchant role of Social-democracy gave rise to the Left Wing in the Socialist Party in 1918-1919. That Left Wing became the conscious bearer in the U. S. of the banner of Communism and of the Communist Party. The development then was of profound and far reaching significance to the labor movement.

Today, the effects of the economic crisis, the discrediting of the MacDonald Labor government as a Socialist force, the rise of fascism in Germany, the Indian revolution and the building up of Socialism in the Soviet Union are responsible for a leftward movement in the ranks of the S.P., which is bound to have important significance to the trade union, Socialist and Communist movements.

Therefore the questions raised in the two letters sent to the *Revolutionary Age* by two "Militants" (These two letters are printed on this page.—Editor.) deserve a serious answer. I will answer these questions in a slightly different order than in which they are asked.

Perspectives of the Leftward Movement

Question No. 3: "Why do you say that there are two ways open before the Militants, either to break with the Socialist Party or to give in to Hillquit and the others. Isn't there a third way. Isn't it possible to capture the Socialist Party for the Militant position? Don't you think we have a better chance of getting our views recognized in the Socialist Party than you have of getting your view recognized in the Communist Party, considering how strong we are in organization."

It is clear from this question that the "Militants" in the S. P. have given very little thought to S. P. history and have failed to thoroughly analyze the real character of the S. P. But before we answer the first part of the question let us dispose of the last part first. There are no fundamental principle differences between the Communist Party, U. S. A. (Majority Group) and the official Communist Party. On the question of the need for proletarian revolution, for Soviet Power, for the dictatorship of the proletariat, for the building up of Socialism we have no differences. We have no difference on the question of the support and defense of the Soviet Union. Our attitude to capitalist democracy and to the capitalist state are the same. We are not faced with the problem of fighting out differences in principle. Our differences are differences on policies involving strategy and tactics, on questions of how best to meet the present day problems in the building up of the Communist movement.

But the differences between the "Militants" and the O'neals, Hillquits, Lees and Thomases are differences of principle of such a character that they cannot be reconciled within the

realms of one party. This fact is brought out best by the resolutions on Russia. There is no common basis in the resolution of the "Militants" and the resolution of Hillquit and Co. Here the fundamental political differences are brought out sharply. The right-wing resolution is distinctly an anti-Soviet Union resolution. It maintains the position that Socialism is possible only after a high development of capitalism with centralization of basic industries, as well as the training of the workers in political democracy (they mean capitalist democracy) and an organized educated working class representative of a majority of the population have been reached. This means that the Socialist Party leadership holds that the material basis for a proletarian revolution does not exist in Russia. It holds that the development of capitalism and the establishment of capitalist democracy is the present necessity for Russia. Couple this theoretical position of the right-wing with their sharp condemnation of the Soviet state and you have the ideal Menshevik counter-revolutionary position as the official position of the S. P.

The "Militants" can not reconcile the position of their resolution on Russia with that of the right-wing. The "Militants" position is: (1) Soviet Russia is making a fundamental contribution to the realization of Socialism; (2) It is a Workers Government; (3) It stands for elimination of capitalist production and distribution; (4) Its economic system is founded on planned production; (5) The S. P. must favor Soviet Russia and utilize the features of the Soviet system for furthering the spread of Socialism in America; (6) The success of the Soviet Union gives impetus to acceptance of Socialism by the workers; (7) The S. P. must look forward to complete realization of Socialism in the Soviet Union; (8) It must recognize that what is taking place in Russia is consistent with Socialist philosophy, with Marxism.

A close examination of the trade union resolutions would also bring out, side by side with tactical differences, sharp principle differences that can not be compromised without abandoning principles. The position of the "Militants" is violently in opposition to the cherished views of the S. P. officialdom on this question. Nor must the "Militants" forget that the Socialist Party of America is part of the Socialist International (the II International).

When one realizes this, it does not appear so easy to capture the S. P. The "Militants" are not so strong as were the left wingers of 1918-1919. The Left Wing then had a mighty organization, a powerful press, a mass following and controlled some of the largest districts of the party. It carried the referendum for the Third International by 60,000 votes. It elected a majority to the NEC. It elected the International delegate and defeated Hillquit for that position. It had an overwhelming majority of the

membership. But Hillquit ordered that the "decks be cleared." The Left Wing was expelled. The old guard Hillquit-Berger-Forward Right-wing held the organization. History will repeat itself. The old guard has already given the warning. What the "Militants" must do is to carry on a fight for principle. The logic of such a fight is to bring them further and further to the left. If they fail to continue an uncompromising principle fight they will sink into the camp of the right-wing. They should continue to fight, line up their forces, keep in mind that an uncompromising proletarian revolutionary stand will mean their eventual expulsion from the S. P. and their approach to the Communist movement. The more principled the fight they make in the S. P. the greater will be their service to the working class and the more positive will be the gains for the revolutionary movement.

The India Question

Question No. 1: Why do you say in the article that the India resolution was the lowest point? It was not our India resolution. We are going to have a strong resolution altogether different.

The India Resolution exposes the degeneration of the S. P. This resolution is an apology for the MacDonald government policy on behalf of British imperialism in India. It approves the Round Table Conference called together by the British for the sole purpose of arranging for the betrayal of the Indian Revolution and declares for the rights of all nations to self-determination in true general Wilsonian style. It fails to recognize the fundamental basis of the Indian revolution as a revolution of the oppressed and exploited masses against British imperialism. It fails to solidize itself with the revolution against British imperialism and its agents, the MacDonald Labor government. It fails to recognize the class forces of the workers and poor peasants let loose by the revolution. It fails to unify itself with the revolutionary proletariat and peasantry. It fails to call upon the Socialist Party and the working class to rally to the support of the Indian revolution and to condemn the bloody role of the MacDonald government. It fails to link up its support for the Indian revolution against British imperialism with the struggle against imperialism generally and American imperialism in particular. Even liberals could draw up a bolder and sharper resolution.

It is very fortunate indeed for the "Militant" movement that the resolution on India introduced at the City Convention was not the "Militant" resolution. It is also welcome news that the "Militants" are "going to offer a strong substitute from the floor." How "strong" the substitute will be, we will see.

(Concluded in the next issue)

THE TEXTILE WORKERS NEED UNITY

by Barney Herman

The textile workers have been suffering from crisis in the industry for many years, with its attendant unemployment, speed-up and wage-cuts. The present world wide crisis has multiplied these to a point where the conditions of the workers are intolerable, and the necessity for organization and struggle becomes clearer and more urgent than ever to the masses of exploited textile workers.

Conditions of the Textile Workers

In New Bedford, weavers who formerly operated 15 looms are now running 45 looms. Wages are almost exactly inversely proportional to the increase in the output, that is, weavers who, formerly received \$42 for a full week, now get \$15 for a full week. But there are no full weeks. The worker is fortunate to get 2 or 3 days work. Those companies working on tire fabrics have been doing 2 days work ever since the crisis started.

In Paterson the conditions of the silk workers are the worst in many years. Plants formerly working 8 hours a day now operate at 10 and 11. At the same time, the wages of the weavers have been reduced to a starvation level. Weavers who only a year ago received 9c a yard on Rayon material now get as low as 3c. Workers who received in the past \$50 to \$90 a week are now faced with \$10 to \$15 in the weekly pay envelope.

In Passaic the mills are operating with only a fraction of their former forces, as the Botany mill, which formerly had 5000 workers, now employs about 1000.

We can go to other sections of the country, Philadelphia, Reading, the South, Danville, Easton, Allentown—everywhere we see the same worsening of the conditions of the textile workers. Everywhere in the industry the discontent of the workers grows from day to day. Yet in spite of these conditions, in spite of the great opportunities for organization and struggle against the textile barons, the organizations of the textile workers are more divided, and weaker than ever before.

The Situation in the National Textile Workers Union

The National Textile Workers Union, in the past, with its former leadership

and line, was the leader of every struggle of the textile workers. It was born in the struggles of the Passaic and New Bedford workers, and its glorious traditions it continued in the organization and leadership of the Gastonia strike.

With the change in line and leadership of the Communist Party, the ultra-left line was forced upon the NTWU, and the entire leadership that founded and built the union, was expelled not only from the Party but from the union itself. Membership in the union was synonymous with the supporting of a faction of the Communist Party along with its ruinous methods and policies in the Union. The chief task of the NTWU locals became—"Fight the Lovestonesites." Demoralization set in rapidly in the ranks of the union. The phrase-mongering leadership has not led a single struggle of the textile workers. The very convention of the Union that excluded Dawson, Weisbord, Buch, Pires, etc. called with loud phrases for a general silk strike in Paterson one year ago. The Paterson local endorsed the calling of the strike. Then at the last moment, the leadership, beat a hasty retreat, and no Paterson silk strike resulted. The leadership, while so unsuccessful in organizing the textile workers, has been remarkably successful in destroying the Union in a year's time. After the expulsion of Keller and Pires, the membership of the New Bedford Local, which was the basis of the NTWU, dropped in a few months from 3000 dues paying members to less than 200. Today there exist only two locals of the NTWU in the entire country. The Union has approximately 200 members, a large proportion being Communist Party members.

It was a year ago that the Textile Unity Committee, consisting of the leadership expelled from the NTWU issued a warning that the union was faced "with destruction," "that the NTWU was in a life-and-death crisis—in a state of threatening ruin." Comrades like A. Weisbord wrote: "In Paterson, in and around Gastonia, in New Bedford, and elsewhere the militant spirit of the workers now finds no leadership in the NTWU." In a year's time the NTWU has gone far on the road that we warned against, and that we called upon the textile workers and members of the NTWU to struggle against.
