

The Workers' League Campaign

By ISRAEL AMTER

It was not a mere accident that the Workers' League of Greater New York launched its electoral campaign at the present moment. It was not an accident that the League came into being at a time when the country is facing tremendous labor upheavals. The Workers' League is the product of a crying need for a political party which will enter into the vital conflicts of the workers,—their very struggles for existence.

The fearful unemployment which has been growing from month to month, the increasing demands of the employers for reductions of wages, while the cost of living continues to mount, their insistence on longer hours, which can only result in the unemployment of further millions, and the concentrated movement and organized campaign to institute the open shop regardless of consequences, these are but a few of the cardinal conditions that called for an organization like the Workers' League to step into the arena and take up the gauntlet thrown down by the bosses and their government.

The crisis in the coal industry, the threatened wage reduction and strike in the meat industry, the threatened railroad strike, appear like isolated manifestations of labor unrest, but in reality are all so closely related to the present capitalist crisis that the necessity of a unifying agent for the labor struggle, such as a political party of labor, becomes apparent at once.

The capitalists of this country, conscious of their power, both economic and political, and of their strangle-hold on the world situation, do not hesitate to challenge the united and disunited labor forces of the country. Although greater chaos confronts the actual operation of industry in this country than in any other part of the world, the capitalists who have created this situation, sure of their control and of the strength of the government, do not hesitate to plunge still further into chaos.

The American workers are unprotected in the face of these pressing problems. They do not understand the situation as do the European workers and are not so well organized. Against the drive of the bosses to enslave them economically, they have not even the safeguard of powerful organizations. Whatever the treachery of the yellow union leaders of Europe, none has descended so low as the American "leaders." None has so brazenly rejected the notion of international affiliation as have the leaders of the A. F. of L. None has so stupidly accepted the dicta of capitalist patriotism as have American labor "leaders," such as Gompers and Lewis. Face to face with open capitalist and governmental despotism, with the open application of force, coercion and violence, as evidenced at Mingo, Albany, Troy, Denver, Bisbee and Calumet, with the abrogation of the "constitutional" rights of free speech, free assemblage and free press, American labor organizations have crumbled.

They have crumbled because at their head are men who cannot and dare not face the issues. They know that it means a fight, a struggle, but they have neither the courage nor the intellectual clarity to face it. They know, or they seem to sense, that *struggles today tend to mass manifestations and now no longer are directed against the employers, but against the government.* They know that the government, in its "paternalism" toward the capitalists, intervenes and must intervene whenever capitalist dominion is endangered.

From experience, the workers are beginning to realize that short strikes with great power behind them alone can succeed. The workers are also beginning to grasp that strikes solely as mere economic tests of power are doomed. The few gains made are offset by the power of the bosses to rob them at the other end. Hence the tendency to enlist larger and larger numbers of workers in strikes. Hence the government's interference with greater frequency. Hence the undisguised elimination of "rights." It is a test of power, and the labor leaders, unequal to the task, flinch, hesitate and back down! Back down as Lewis backed down, as the miners' convention backed down in refusing to stand behind Howat, and in not supporting the Mingo miners by a general strike, which alone could force the bosses into negotiations. Back down, as undoubtedly the railroad leaders will back down, utilizing some such slogan as "public consideration," since they have openly been told that the "strike is not against the railroads but against the government."

As a result of the break-down of the unions and their inability even to organize the unemployed, there is arising a movement of rebellion against the present labor bureaucracy, against the cowardly labor "leaders," who, even today, in the midst of unemployment of such vast proportions, and of fearful wage-slashing, retain their high salaries. There is a movement to bring the unions together into industrial unions, into One Big Union—which is fought as openly by the labor leaders, as by the bosses and the government. There is the rank and file movement—the Shop Delegate System—to put all power in the hands of the workers in the shops. There is a revolutionary mass movement going on in the ranks of labor that is showing itself all over the country in an endeavor of the rank and file to get control of the labor organizations.

Propagating these ideas and the necessity of organizing for achieving them the Workers' League openly combats the treacherous Socialist Party, which denounces proletarian dictatorship and supports capitalist dictatorship. Its experience of capitalist terrorism at Albany, the counting-out of Lee and Cassidy as aldermen in the city of New York, and similar encounters in all parts of the country do not prevent it from seducing the workers into the belief that they must use the "pure" methods of parliamentary persuasion and the capitalist ballot as the sole and rightful means of labor emancipation. It sees in the gradual realization of reforms the steps to the Socialist state, rather than the strengthening of the capitalist state. It has rejected the only possible means of revolution—direct action, international organization and proletarian dictatorship—and is leading the workers to surrender. In America as in Europe, the Socialist Party is the heart of counter-revolution.

The crumbling of the Socialist Party, the expulsion and resignation of all of its revolutionary elements, the slow permeation of the more virile and progressive unions with the new labor tactics, and the affronts of the capitalist government have furnished a splendid field for the propagation of revolutionary ideas by the Workers' League.

The giant figure of Soviet Russia, the incarnation of the new methods, the embodiment of revolutionary thought, tactics and strategy, has blazed a new road for the workers of the world. The very attacks of the capitalists and the imperialist governments on Soviet Russia are proof of the

validity of her methods. Hence the rallying of the revolutionary workers to the banner of the Third International! Hence the demand for the recognition of Soviet Russia! Hence the looking to Russia for revolutionary inspiration and ideas! Hence the demand of the Workers' League for a Soviet Government in the United States!

The capitalist courts, realizing the revolutionary significance of the Workers' League, have already attempted to use capitalist dictatorship and prune the ticket of the Workers' League by ruling off the ballot as "convicts unfit to be on the ballot beside decent people," two of its candidates, Benjamin Gitlow and Harry Winitzky, serving sentences for activity as Communists. The capitalists and their government are the best educators of the Communist movement!
