

THE MEMBERSHIP MEETING IN NEW YORK

By ISRAEL AMTER.

THE results of the New York membership meeting were such that they need analysis. First of all the vote: 482 for the majority thesis, 330 for the minority. This would appear to be a great majority for the central executive committee thesis—and taken on the face of it would indicate a strong group in the city of New York supporting the position of Foster, Cannon and Bittelman.

The matter, however, is not so simple, for it must be understood that the strength of the Lore group in the party is concentrated in New York. In fact, outside of the minority group in the New York district, the Lore group and their followers are the strongest group, the Foster-Cannon group being a small minority. It is a sad fact—but still a fact. The Lore group must not be regarded as a group of Comrade Lore and his friends. There is a Lore psychology and ideology which have succeeded in consolidating a large number of comrades, despite the decision of the Communist International, despite the fact that Comrade Zinoviev declared Comrade Lore "not a Communist;" and like a "social democrat hidden behind barricades because he says he is an orthodox Marxian;" despite the fact that the resolution of the Communist International declared him a "remnant of the Two-and-a-Half International in the Workers Party."

This is due to nothing else than reports are current in the party, evidently inspired by Comrades Foster and Olgin, that the Olgin-Lore point of view on LaFollette won in Moscow. This is totally untrue. As Comrade Radek said, it is merely a coincidence that a "social-democratic point of view (that of Olgin-Lore) agrees with that of the Communist International." Olgin-Lore were against the LaFollette alliance at a matter of principle; the Communist International was against it as a matter of safety for the party, since the Comintern deemed that the party was too weak to carry out the maneuver without danger to itself. The Comintern did not brand the tactics as such as opportunistic, but did see that in the American party there were strong evidences of opportunism—in the C. E. C. and in the ranks—which clearly indicated that the party would not be able to carry out the maneuvers without menacing its existence.

Associated with this group are comrades who have been appointed by the C. E. C. to conduct the industrial work—comrades whom the C. E. C. thesis brands as opportunists. The whole right wing element in the party gathers about the banner of Comrade Lore—even comrades who now call themselves followers of the Foster group, yet ideologically are still in the Lore camp.

This group gave the victory to the majority thesis and in stating this, we do not weep tears after a defeat. We of the minority consider the New York membership meeting a great victory; firstly, because the vote shows a strong Bolshevik minority in the city of New York; and secondly, because the lines are clearly drawn. Even the Comrade Lore had his

scruples about the C. E. C. thesis—until the last moment—and at the German federation convention showed an irreconcilability between his view and that of the majority, it was perfectly obvious that, as usual, Lore would line up with the majority—to whom he has a natural affinity.

As for the meeting itself. New York contains the largest and most advanced membership in the party. It was expected, therefore, that the majority would send its most capable comrade to present its position. Bittelman had done a very poor job for the party both at the German and the Hungarian federation conventions, and besides could not be considered a "strong" man. Comrade Cannon was chosen for the presentation in New York. Those who had heard Comrade Cannon's presentation in the branches knew in advance what the contents of his argumentation at the membership meeting would be. A little understanding and command of theory is necessary in New York (This is said without any spirit of factionalism.) If our membership is to be Bolshevized, then it is to be expected that the national educational director of the party should really command theory. There was not one moment of theory in the presentation of Comrade Cannon; only flamboyant demagoguery, misrepresentation and appeals to the prejudices of the membership.

Thus, the book by Comrade Lovestone, "The Government—Strikebreaker," was held up to the contempt of the comrades present, most of whom have not read the book. It was declared a non-Communist book, a farmer-labor screed, devoid of all evidence of Communism. It was unfortunate for Comrade Cannon as soon as he received the book, Comrade Losovsky, head of the Red International of Labor Unions, ordered its translation into Russian and publication by the R. I. L. U.

Before the meeting, New York was greeted by the publication of a pamphlet entitled "For A Communist Party of Action—Against Liquidating the Workers (Communist) Party, Against Substituting the Workers (Communist) Party by a Sham Farmer-Labor Party—an Appeal to the Members of District No. 2 Workers Party." Then followed the names of thirty comrades of the English, Jewish, Russian, Lithuanian, Italian, Greek and Polish branches and of the Y. W. L. At the bottom it stated that the "publication was authorized by the central executive committee."

This document was an eleventh-hour attempt to separate the so-called Foster-Cannon group from the Lore group. It was an eleventh-hour slander upon the minority and a misrepresentation of its viewpoint and aims. At no place does the document say a word about the Two-and-a-Half Internationalism of the Lore group; at no place is there even mention of the Lore group. This was quite natural. The point of view of the Lore and of the Foster group coincides. In other words, the Foster-Cannon group considers the minority, the "Marxian group in the Workers Party," (as the executive committee of the Comintern

said) the dangerous group in the party.

There are two other significant facts about this pamphlet. As far as we have been able to learn, the central executive committee of the party authorized the publication of a pamphlet by Comrades Olgin, Cannon and Manley, at the expense of the party, to expound the majority point of view. We do not know whether the political committee of the C. E. C. approved the pamphlet before publication. The name of Comrade Cannon does not appear on the pamphlet, but instead the names of thirty comrades of various language groups.

We wish to ask the C. E. C. a question: DOES THE MAJORITY OF THE C. E. C. TAKE THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR LEGALIZING CAUCUSES WITHIN THE PARTY? If they do, they are acting in violation of the Communist International, and are openly carrying on disruptive work in the party. If the C. E. C. did not give its approval to the publication of the pamphlet in this form, how does Comrade Cannon abuse the authority of the C. E. C. to allow a pamphlet to be published by a legally constituted group of various federations within the party? Comrade Cannon, who said to me that he gets his orders from Comrade Foster—and not from the central executive commit-

tee, which sends out all instructions and decisions thru the executive secretary of the party, has openly constituted a caucus, a faction within the party. If the members of the central executive committee of the party carry on such disruptive work, then what is the use of all passionate appeals to build the Workers Party?

A second point. All publications in any district of the party must pass thru the district executive committee. If the party is to retain its unity as an organization. The district executive committee had no cognizance of the publication of this pamphlet ostensibly authorized by the C. E. C. Is any group within the party, even if Comrade Cannon, a member of the C. E. C., belongs to it, to be allowed to usurp the authority of the recognized authority within the district?

The meeting was one of the best meetings that have ever been held by the party membership in N. Y. City. The splendid presentation of the minority viewpoint by Comrade Ruthenberg showed who are the Marxians in the party. The membership recognized this fact and gave him an ovation.

The minority is well satisfied with the membership meeting, but would like an answer from the C. E. C. on the above questions. The membership is entitled to an answer.