

S.P. Heads Block Offer For Unity of Jobless In Fight for Relief

Ignore Pledges for Joint Action—Silent on Proposal to Join the National Congress for Unemployment Insurance

By I. AMTER

On Aug. 10, the National Unemployment Council addressed a letter to the leaders of the National Unemployed League, Workers Unemployed Union, Illinois Workers Alliance, People's Unemployed League of Baltimore, etc., as well as to the Socialist Party, Communist Party, Farmer-Labor Party of Minnesota, to unions, fraternal, professional, Negro, veteran and youth organizations, proposing the setting up of a committee to arrange a national congress on unemployment and social insurance. The letter called for a meeting on Aug. 30 in New York City. The leaders of the Socialist Party and of the unemployed organizations controlled by the Socialists and Musteites ignored the letter. Subsequent to this meeting a personal discussion was had with Norman Thomas, "militant" leader of the Socialist Party, who declared that he agreed with the idea of a broad united front congress and supported the Workers Unemployment and Social Insurance Bill.

A subsequent meeting of the committee was held during the absence of Norman Thomas from the city, but he designated Mary Fox, of the League for Industrial Democracy, to represent him. In addition, David Lasser, of the Workers Unemployed Union, attended the meeting. Both of these leading Socialists were present as "observers" and participated in the discussion. A further, smaller meeting was held to clarify some issues, and Miss Fox agreed to submit a memorandum on their position. This memorandum was at no time submitted, nor could any response from them be obtained.

On Oct. 23, the National Unemployment Council addressed another letter to the leaders of the other unemployed organizations, raising sharply the question of the National Congress for Unemployment and Social Insurance to be held in Washington, D. C., Jan. 5-7, and the question not only of the united front, but of the unity of all unemployed organizations in this country. This was done on the basis of the resolutions of these organizations in which they professed to stand for genuine unemployment insurance and have even endorsed the Workers Unemployment and Social Insurance Bill. It was further based upon pretensions of the leaders of these organizations that they advocate the unification of the unemployed organizations into one body.

On Nov. 8, David Lasser, professing to speak for a "National Action Committee" embracing several unemployed organizations, replied to the communication of the National Unemployment Council. In this letter, he gives no answer to the questions of the National Congress or of unification of the unemployed organizations. He does so on the ground that he is not "authorized to deal" with them.

Block Unity

Thus the unemployed organizations outside of the National Unemployment Council, whose leaders pretend to stand for the Workers Unemployment and Social Insurance Bill, and whose rank and file through conventions (Muste—National Unemployed League), and through resolutions to their central committees (Workers Unemployed Union), have expressed their endorsement of the Workers Bill, are being kept from united action not only with the National Unemployment Council but with thousands of locals of the A. F. of L., independent and T.U.U.L. unions, fraternal, professional, Negro, veteran, youth and farm organizations, who are fighting to force the U. S. Congress to enact a system of genuine unemployment and social insurance.

This is so much more to be condemned in view of the address of Roosevelt on Nov. 13 at the so-called "conference" called by the Committee on Economic Security—a conference which supposedly was to serve not merely as a sounding board, but as a "front" for the Roosevelt-Wall Street proposals. The demagogic of Mayor LaGuardia of New York and of Thomas Kennedy, secretary-treasurer of the United Mine Workers, was lost in the open frontal attack of the bankers of this country through the mouth of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Roosevelt and Wall Street believe they have a mandate for this head-on assault on the workers of this country through the sweeping victory for the Democratic Party on Nov. 6.

New Relief Attacks

Though this brazenness could not have been foreseen and some further demagogic was expected, nevertheless it was clear from previous pronouncements of Roosevelt, Perkins, Dr. Witte, etc., that the government has no intention of proposing or countenancing a system of genuine unemployment and social insurance. At this time, the government and the bankers are forging plans for the regimentation first of the unemployed, for reducing them to a standard of hunger relief in return for forced labor, for cutting hundreds of thousands off the relief lists altogether, for scattering the unemployed over the country side, and for conducting an offensive against the wages of the shop workers.

Any working class organization not to take a clear stand in favor of the united front of all working class organizations is a crime against the working class. Its result can only be to continue the split in the working class.

ing class and to prevent joint action. This only serves the interests of the bankers, who benefit by this split.

The National Unemployment Council was also aware that the other unemployed organizations had arranged for Nov. 24 as a day of struggle for relief and for the Workers Unemployment and Social Insurance Bill. In its letter the National Unemployment Council proposed to the other unemployed organizations that this day should be a day of joint struggle, with the demands, method and form of struggle and leadership to be worked out jointly on a local, county and state scale—and that this united front should be considered a step toward the unification of all unemployed organizations.

In reply, David Lasser writes that "the exclusion of an invitation to the Unemployment Councils to join the National Action Committee was based on the unanimous experience of the representative organizations that they found it impossible to work harmoniously with you; and that the Councils have been a disruptive influence among the organized unemployed."

How does this look IN FACT? In Pittsburgh, there is a united front of five unemployed organizations, including the Unemployed Citizens League of Allegheny County, whose leader, Robert Lieberman, supposedly agrees with Lasser's statement, but is working in the united front with the Unemployment Council! It is this same Robert Lieberman, Socialist, who expelled McKinney, Musteite, and a few locals of the Unemployed Citizens League for united front with the Unemployment Council. Lieberman is in the united front in Pittsburgh with the McKinney locals and the Unemployment Council, but today he sits on one chair with the Musteite National Unemployed League in "criticism" of the National Unemployment Council! In Eastern Ohio, the united front for November 24 has been established between the Ohio Unemployed League (Muste) and the so-called "disrupters," the Unemployment Council. In Chicago, a broad united front of twelve organizations has been set up for November 24, with the Unemployment Council of Cook County playing a leading role. At the recent congress in Springfield, Ill., there were present delegates from the Illinois Workers Alliance.

Joint Action Vital

What is the meaning of this effort of the "National Action Committee" to keep the National Unemployment Council from joint action with the other unemployed organizations? Its meaning is clear: it aims to continue the cleavage in the working class, and particularly among the unemployed, that can only make their struggle more difficult. This is certainly not in the interest of the working class. It serves only the narrow, self-seeking political aims of these leaders. It can only serve the enemies of the working class—the finance-capitalists of the country.

It comes at a time when in all countries of the world the question of the united front is being discussed and in several countries is being carried out by the workers regardless of political affiliation. As a result of this drive among the masses for the united front, the Executive Committee of the Socialist International is compelled to give up its former position of categorically rejecting the united front proposals of the Communist International and to deal with the question most seriously. To refuse to do so would mean that the Socialist masses would repudiate them.

In the United States this movement is gathering force, despite the attitude of the Socialist, Muste and A. F. of L. leaders. The workers want to struggle, and they realize that unity in the struggle is basic if their demands are to be won and their conditions be improved.

Unity In Action

In its letter to the other unemployed organizations, the National Unemployment Council declared that "unity of the existing organizations will not merely mean the adding together of the membership of these organizations. It would become the magnet that will attract large numbers of isolated organizations and at the same time help in the organization of the masses of unemployed still outside all organization."

The National Unemployment Council laid down no conditions for this unity except that "it should be carried through on the broadest democratic basis and that the program adopted should be of a fighting character based on class lines."

Ignore Pledges

We must remind the Socialist and Musteite leaders and the rank and file of their organizations of united front and unity decisions that they have made at conferences and conventions held during the past one and a half years: in Chicago, May, 1933, at the Mooney Congress; in Columbus, July, 1933, at the first convention of the National Unemployed League; in Cleveland, Aug. 1933, at the conference for United Action against the N.R.A.; in New York, Sept. 1933, at the first congress against war and fascism. At these places, the leaders of these organizations pledged the united front and the unification of all unemployed organizations. In January 1934, at the organization of the Eastern Federation of the Unem-

ployed and Emergency Workers, controlled by Socialists, the conference endorsed the Workers Unemployment and Social Insurance Bill. The second convention of the National Unemployed League in Columbus, July, 1934, also endorsed the Workers Bill. Yet to date, the Muste leaders (Ramuglis, Johnson, Truax) and the Socialist leaders (Lasser, Fox, etc.) have not carried out a single decision in regard to united front and unity that was made by the rank and file delegates at their conventions. On the contrary—at the last convention of the National Unemployed League, with Lasser and others present, they passed a resolution proposing the united front with "anybody except the National Unemployment Council."

The record of the National Unemployment Council, on the other hand, during the whole period, has been a record of struggle for Federal Unemployment and Social Insurance, for the united front and unity. Wherever the opponent organizations exist in the field together with the National Unemployment Council, it is the National Unemployment Council that has taken the initiative in proposing and carrying through the united front. The answer of the Socialist and Musteite leaders to their own rank and file that has formed the united front with the National Unemployment Council, has been expulsions and threats of expulsion, as in New York, Ohio, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, Washington, etc.

Prepare for January Congress

Unity is the outstanding issue in the coming struggles. A bitter winter is ahead. The united front and the merging of all unemployed organizations must not be postponed. Every effort must be exerted to force the Socialist and Muste leaders to change their position. This is the task of the rank and file of these organizations, whom we must assist in every way. But if these leaders will not alter their position, then unity must be achieved in spite of them.

The National Unemployment Council, as a leading participant in the National Arrangements Committee for the National Congress for Unemployment and Social Insurance, calls upon the leaders of the Socialist Party, particularly Norman Thomas, and of the Socialist and Muste controlled unemployed organizations, publicly to state their position on the National Congress and on unity of the unemployed organizations.

We call upon the local, city, county and state bodies of all organizations to take up the call for the National Congress and to participate in the local, city and county arrangements committees in the preparations for the National Congress. This Congress must be made a gathering point for all sincere elements that are fighting for the interests of the unemployed and for genuine unemployment insurance.

We urge all local, county and state organizations of the National Unemployment Council to form the united front with the other unemployed organizations that are arranging demonstrations on Nov. 24 on the basis of joint agreements, joint leadership, etc. Wherever the leaders reject these proposals, the National Unemployment Council locals shall none-the-less participate with their own slogans, demands, banners, etc.; shall fraternize with the rank and file and bring about unity in action over the heads of their splitting leaders.

The National Unemployment Council also appeals to the rank and file of the opponent unemployed organizations and to their local and county bodies to form unity groups and to carry on a struggle within their organization to build the united front in action with the National Unemployment Council, at relief bureaus, in demonstrations, etc., so that in January, in spite of the leaders and their splitting policies, covered though they are with sham "radical" phrases, the unemployed may unite their ranks and these leaders be exposed before the whole working class as obstructors of the unity of the unemployed.

FORWARD TO A MASS NATIONAL CONGRESS! FORWARD TO UNITY OF THE UNEMPLOYED!

East St. Louis Relief Rally Set for Nov. 24

EAST ST. LOUIS, Ill., Nov. 16.—Plans for a demonstration and march to City Hall on Saturday, Nov. 24, have been adopted by Local 1 of the Federal and State Aid Association here. The demands of the unemployed workers include a 5 per cent increase in cash relief; for public works under union wages and conditions and a guaranteed thirty-hour work week; no forced labor; and unemployment insurance.

The danger to the success of the demonstration lies with the attempts of some of the Association officials who attempt to wreck every militant action by the membership. Two of these, Earl Clause and Lew Edgar, with the help of several of their henchmen, try to turn every meeting into one of praise of the Roosevelt starvation policies and the strikebreaking Chamber of Commerce here.

Attempts have been made to expel Communists from the organization, but have met with no success. Even the "trials" held by the executive board without allowing the membership to participate have been defeated. The rank and file are mobilizing to defeat these maneuvers by rallying the whole community for the Nov. 24 demonstration, and by uniting solidly for adequate cash relief and for enactment of the Workers Unemployment Insurance Bill.