

HOW LENINISTS FIGHT FOR SOCIAL INSURANCE

Washington Congress Notable Achievement Of United Front Policy

Despite Sabotage of A. F. of L. Officialdom, Many
Unions As Well As Broad Group of Organi-
zations United Around Program

By I. Amter

THE National Congress for Unemployment and Social Insurance represented the broadest united front of any character that has been held in the United States in recent years. This united front, despite the opposition of all the reformist and reactionary leaders in the country, brought

together a large number of trade unionists of the A. F. of L., independent and T. U. U. L. unions, of fraternal organizations, unemployed, veteran, professional, white collar, Negro, church organizations, etc. Despite the sabotaging actions of the reactionary leaders, members of the A. F. of L. and independent unions sat side by side and discussed most earnestly the problem that had brought them together in Washington—the need of some security under the present system, the demand for the enactment of the Workers Bill H. R. 2827.

William Green did everything in his power to prevent the united front and the participation of A. F. of L. unions in the Congress. During the period of the preparations of the Congress, and prior to it, he circularized the locals and central labor bodies, calling the Workers Bill a Communist bill and asserting that the Communists are not interested in the enactment of any bill but are carrying on the campaign and holding the Congress only to promote their political program. During the preparations for the Congress, Green and Frank Morrison tried to stop the discus-

sion of the Congress and the election of delegates, by again slandering the Congress. In some cases, where in the locals there were no effective rank and file groups, Green succeeded in intimidating the locals. But despite this, 306 locals sent delegates. Many more would have sent delegates, but they had no funds.

Green's Maneuvers

Green thought he could confuse the rank and file of the A. F. of L., by putting forward "his own" bill. This bill tried to approach the demands in the Workers Bill. "His" bill called for unemployment compensation equivalent to 50 per cent of the worker's wage, but no less than \$15 a week, and to continue over a period of 26 weeks. Green put this forward on December 11. He called on the locals of the A. F. of L. to consider this bill their bill. Three days later, Green voted for the bill proposed by the Advisory Council of the National Committee on Economic Recovery, which called for 50 per cent of the worker's wage, but not to exceed \$15 a week and to continue for a lesser period. The Advisory Council proposal provided for one week's compensation for each four weeks' of previous work. Thus if a worker had worked for 20 weeks, he would be entitled to compensation for one fourth of the number of weeks he had worked, namely 5 weeks, and then would have no further claim. Similarly to the provisions of the Green bill, the fund would be created by means of a tax on the payroll, which would be handed on to the consumer, in the form of a consumers' or sales tax. In other words, the workers would have to pay for their own insurance. Both bills excluded the present unemployed.

This was Green's grandstand play in order to prevent the rank and file and local unions of the A. F. of L. from uniting their forces with the workers of other organizations in the struggle for genuine unemployment and social insurance.

Frank Gorman, of the United Textile Workers, who at the U. T.

W. convention a few months ago in New York unanimously endorsed the Workers Bill, toured the south speaking at one local after the other against the sending of delegates to the National Congress. This is the same Frank Gorman who sold out the textile strike, and did everything in his power to prevent the rank and file from fighting for the carrying out of their own decisions. Despite his sabotage and threats to the locals, southern textile workers attended the Congress.

The Socialist-controlled unemployed organizations had endorsed the Workers Bill, but their leaders both refused to participate in the sponsoring committee for arranging the Congress, and also sabotaged the participation of their organizations in the Congress. David Lasser, allegedly speaking for the group, tried to prevent the sending of delegates—but they came nonetheless. He himself, attended the Congress as an "observer" sent by his own local Central Committee of New York City. What were the objections of these leaders? They alleged that the National Unemployment Council believes and promotes "dual unionism." This supposedly would prevent A. F. of L. unions from participating in joint action. What a disappointment it was to Lasser who saw and heard A. F. of L. union representatives speak at the Congress, pledging their full support to the Workers Bill and the plan of action to force enactment of the Bill!

Other Saboteurs

A. J. Muste, William Truax and Anthony Ramuglia, now part of the Trotskyite counter-revolutionary American Workers' Party, tried to split the forces of the working class in the struggle for the Workers' Bill, by promising their supporters in the National Unemployed League "independent action" on the Bill on Jan. 21. Then they postponed it to Jan. 24, and again to Feb. 12. Anything to prevent united action for their own counter-revolutionary purposes! Despite the complete sabotage of the preparations for the Congress, to which they likewise were invited, despite their efforts to expel militant leaders of the N.U.L. who went as delegates to the Congress (Lehigh Valley, Pa., and Muskingum County, Ohio), the delegates came and will fight out at home the sabotaging, splitting tactics of these so-called "revolutionary" leaders.

How stupid it sounds when one reads in the organ of these people the following from the pen of Arnold Johnson, national secretary of the National Unemployed League! "Another assemblage at Washington which deserves only suspicion from the unemployed is the so-called Congress for Unemployment and Social Insurance, which is in reality a masquerade preliminary to the second annual convention of the discredited Unemployment Councils of the Communist Party."

Johnson and his colleagues boycotted the Congress, refused to add the forces of the National Unemployed League to those of the unions, unemployed organizations—

and at the same time they carried on a campaign of terror against the locals of the N. U. L. that refused to accept this splitting policy.

What does it mean when the Lovestoneites, who are being thrown out of the leadership of unions, where their shady methods and collaboration with the reactionary A. F. of L. officials have cost

them the confidence of the rank and file, come to the Congress with a finished mimeographed leaflet declaring that:

"The manner in which the present National Congress for Unemployment and Social Insurance was called and the orientation of its leadership has hindered the building of a broad movement.

Workers' Unemployment, Old Age And Social Insurance Bill, HR 2827

The Workers Unemployment and Social Insurance bill, formerly H. R. 7596 in the last Congress, and now numbered H. R. 2827, is herewith given in full.

The Workers' Bill was presented to Congressman Lundeen by the National Sponsoring Committee for the National Congress for Unemployment Insurance, which convened Jan. 5. The bill was improved by the Sponsoring Committee in line with suggestions of thousands of workers and their organizations. Congressman Lundeen, against the desires of the Sponsoring Committee, made several changes in the bill. The Workers Bill, with the few changes made by Lundeen, which is now before the present Congress follows:

SEC. 1. Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, that this Act shall be known by the title "The Workers' Unemployment, Old Age and Social Insurance Act."

SEC. 2. The Secretary of Labor is hereby authorized and directed to provide for the immediate establishment of a system of unemployment insurance for the purpose of providing compensation for all workers and farmers above 18 years of age, who are unemployed through no fault of their own.

Such compensation shall be equal to average local wages in such occupation but shall, in no case, be less than \$10 per week plus \$3 for each dependent. Workers, willing and able to do full-time work, but unable to secure full-time employment, shall be entitled to receive the difference between their earnings and the average local wages in such occupation for full-time employment. The minimum compensation guaranteed by this Act shall be increased in conformity with rises in the cost of living.

Such unemployment insurance shall be administered and controlled, and the minimum compensation shall be adjusted by workers and farmers under rules and regulations which shall be prescribed by the Secretary of Labor in conformity with the purposes and provisions of this Act, through unemployment insurance commissions directly elected by members of workers' and farmers' organizations.

SEC. 3. The Secretary of Labor is hereby further authorized and directed to provide for the immediate establishment of other systems of social insurance for the purpose of providing compensation for all workers and farmers who are unable to work because of sickness, old-age, maternity, industrial injury or any other disability. Such compensation shall be the same as provided by Section 2 of this Act for unemployment insurance and shall be administered in like manner.

Compensation for disability because of maternity shall be paid to women during the period of eight weeks previous and eight weeks following childbirth.

SEC. 4. All moneys necessary to pay the compensation guaranteed by this Act and the cost of establishing and maintaining the administration of this Act shall be paid by the Government of the United States. All such moneys are hereby appropriated out of all funds in the Treasury of the United States not otherwise appropriated. Further taxation if necessary to provide funds for the purpose of this Act, shall be levied on inheritances, gifts, and individual and corporation incomes of \$5,000 a year and over. The benefits of this Act shall be extended to workers, whether they be industrial, agricultural, domestic, office or professional workers, and to farmers, without discrimination because of age, sex, race, color, religious or political opinion or affiliation. No worker or farmer shall be disqualified from receiving the compensation guaranteed by this Act because of past participation in strikes, refusal to work in place of strikers, or at less than average local or trade union wages, or under unsafe or unsanitary conditions, or where hours are longer than the prevailing union standards of a particular trade or locality, or at any unreasonable distance from home.

It is flying in the face of reality to expect a broad movement sponsored on the one hand by only one section of the unemployed organizations in this country, the hopelessly sectarian Unemployed Councils, and on the other hand, having as signatory to the Congress call the dual T.U.U.L. unions, which can only alienate the broad masses of workers and the unions affiliated to the A. F. of L.

In spite of the "hopeless sectarianism" of the National Unemployment Council, and the cooperation not only of T.U.U.L. but also of A. F. of L. and independent unions in the sponsorship and in the work of organizing the Congress, the record stands as follows:

A. F. of L. delegates: 326.
Independent union delegates: 142.
T.U.U.L. delegates: 218.

All told, there were 1,180 unionists in the Congress, this including 628 members of the A. F. of L.

How "hopelessly sectarian," the Communists and the National Unemployment Council are! How prophetic the Lovestoneites were! What asses they made of themselves at the Congress!

What Congress Showed

The National Congress showed what can be done on the issue of the Workers Bill. It showed that the masses of workers in their organizations are ready to join ranks in the fight for genuine unemployment and social insurance. It showed that the pressure has been exerted by the militant organizations in this country on the question of the Workers Bill has forced not only Green and other reformists to make hysterical efforts to behead the movement—and unsuccessfully—but has also compelled the Roosevelt government to adopt high-speed methods in an effort to stem the movement for genuine unemployment insurance. The readiness of the Congressmen and U. S. Senators to listen to the delegations of the Congress, the answers they were forced to give to the earnest men and women who composed the delegations, show that no longer can they play around with the issue. Unemployment and social insurance has become the central issue before the country—and the National Congress was a high point in uniting and consolidating the forces fighting for the Workers Bill.

Much work is still to be done. The hearings before the Labor Committee of the House of Representatives, the chairman of which has expressed his support of the Workers Bill, must be well prepared. We must and will show the U. S. Congress and the country that we know whereof we speak when we demand the enactment of the Workers Bill. It is necessary to get the bill also before the state legislatures and to prepare for open hearings in similar manner. This is a most serious task which the fighters for the Workers Bill must organize to carry out without a moment's delay.

But, above all, the organizing of committees in all localities for the Workers Bill; the transformation of

the sponsoring committees into such committees; the widening of the committees by the broadest discussion in all organizations; the arrangement of debates and symposiums; the adoption of resolutions; the sending of telegrams to Roosevelt, the Congressmen, and state legislators; the organization of demonstrations, marches and strikes—these are only part of the task of popularizing and mobilizing behind the Workers Bill, H. R. 2827, and making it the central issue before every working class organization.

More than 3,000 locals of the A. F. of L. and independent unions endorsed the bill—but their leaders have done nothing further in the struggle for the adoption of the Workers Bill. Large fraternal organizations endorsed the bill and sent delegates to the Congress. They and their branches must be rallied to active support of the Bill. We must get into the American fraternal organizations that face the same situation in regard to benefits for their members.

For Unity of Action

The Muste and Socialist controlled organizations must be drawn into the struggle for the Workers Bill. They endorsed it—but the leaders are preventing them from uniting in the fight for it. Only wide pressure from below—despite all intimidation—will force the leaders of these organizations to reverse their position. The fight is now on—let these leaders show their

sincerity. They say they stand for the Workers Bill. Arnold Johnson states that we "have degraded the fight of the unemployed to the parliamentary sphere (!)." We declare that we will use also this "sphere" just as the Musteites used it on Nov. 26 when a delegation went to Washington to see Miss Perkins.

There is ample room for united mass action. We invite you to join us. The "hopelessly sectarian" National Unemployment Council, with the assistance of the militant and leftward-looking workers and their organizations brought about the broadest Congress that this country has witnessed in years. If you are sincere, you will come in, and above all, you will bring all your locals and followers into the fight for the Workers' Bill.

Less forecasting—more united action. Now is not the time for splitting tactics. The workers will no longer tolerate it.

To those workers we particularly address ourselves: Your leaders denied you the right to work jointly with your brothers in the A. F. of L., independent and T. U. U. L. unions, with the unemployed in the National Unemployment Council and other unemployed organizations, with the fraternal and professional organizations. Is not unity of action our greatest need? If your leaders cannot choose correctly, then you should make the choice for UNITY OF ACTION—AGAINST ALL SPLITTERS!

Organizer Tells How Victory On Scottsboro Stirred South

(The following incident reported to the Daily Worker in a letter from a Southern organizer, is published as a human document of the class struggle which tells graphically how the Communist Party is striking roots among the Negro workers of the South. The name of the writer is withheld for obvious reasons.)

BIRMINGHAM, Ala., Jan. 18.—It was a cold, dark night, about nine o'clock. I had been sent across town to deliver a message to one of the Negro comrades.

I crept up the alley so narrow that I could almost touch the shacks on each side. I walked lightly, cautiously, and finding the right house I tapped gently on the door. No answer. I tapped again.

I heard movements inside, and knew that the comrades were getting out of bed. Soon the door was opened and I went in.

The shack had one small room. The light from the smoldering fire threw shadows over the place—two beds, a table, a cupboard, and clothes hanging on the wall. A dog lay in front of the fire.

We huddled around the fire to keep warm and to read the instructions I had brought. We talked in whispers. Suddenly there was a knock on the door. We looked at each other, but nobody said a word. Another knock. "Who's there?" "Smith," came the answer. We breathed easily again as the comrade opened the door and Comrade Smith came into the room. He was a tall, gaunt Negro in overalls. His face was beaming as he pulled a paper out of his pocket. "Great news in the paper, comrades! Great news!" he whispered. We spread the Daily Worker out on the hearth, and all read the headlines at once: "I.L.D. Wins Hearing On Scottsboro."

As I walked home I thought of Comrade Smith. I knew that he couldn't read a word, but he was so anxious to know what was in the Daily that he had gone to another comrade's house to have him read the headlines. Then he had walked on to this place to bring the good news, and to hear the rest of the story.

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