

# Michigan CP Wins a Tough Fight

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The victorious campaign of the Michigan Communists to regain their place on the ballot was a grand demonstration that a mass party can be built.

One of the stories going the rounds is that of a housewife in Albion county who greeted the Communist petition collector with the words: "So you're a Communist!" Standing in the rain this housewife told Abner Berry, educational director of the Communist Party of Michigan. "I declare I'm so glad to see a Communist." This housewife told how she knew of the Communist Party in its fight for the workers demands for equal rights for the Negro people.

It must be understood that Michigan law operates against minority parties being on the ballot. Some indications of this. A minimum of 11,744 signatures of registered voters are required to place a political party on the ballot. What is more; such signatures must come from 10 counties in the state. Nor is this all. Not more than 35 percent may come from any one county.

In many outstate counties, reactionary control has militated against securing petitions. In 1940, for example, wholesale intimidation of the people of Michigan followed a successful drive to get the Communist Party on the ballot. The capitalist press printed lists of names of signers, resulting in loss of jobs, social ostracism, even to the extent of forcing signers of petitions out of communities. Many of the collectors were molested by the police.

Yet 14,000 people of Michigan from 27 counties signed the Communist Party petitions.

Behind this figure of achievement, a significant story lies. How was it achieved? Early scouting in the outstate areas resulted in the sum total of 3 signatures after three days in the field. This at first resulted in a feeling of pessimism.

But something happened to make the difference in the final results. What had happened was a firm recognition that not to have achieved this drive would have meant a failure to rid the Party of revisionist, lack of struggle methods of work; of lack

of confidence in the working people, the Negro people, the women, veterans and youth of Michigan.

This is by no means to imply that there was easy unanimity in such thinking. For example, Jack White, Labor secretary of the Michigan CP District described to me in detail a state board and staff meeting in which these questions were discussed.

This was at a time when with only two weeks to go—3,500 signatures had been collected—the majority in Wayne County. The maximum allowable — another twist of Michigan-law for minority parties—were 4,100 in any one county. Assessing the situation mathematically, he stated, some 50 signatures a day were required—with some hard traveling through the state, to boot. Approximately 1,000 manhours were required to insure fulfillment of this petition drive.

But the entire Party staff was organized to head crews that were sent out into the field to secure signatures. A large part of the credit for this, all CP workers emphasize here, goes to the stubborn determination of Carl Winter, chairman of the Michigan State Committee of the Communist Party.

## EAGER RECEPTION

Many Michigan Communists tell you enthusiastically today of the surprise they experienced at the response of the people for the message of the Party. Not only, they tell you, in the eagerness

with which they were received, but the conviction uttered by the people in such words as: "if the Communists are not on the ballot here, they must have something"; "I have heard about the Communists"; "Tell us more about your Party"; "We have heard about your fight for full equality for the Negro People," and "I want more information about your Party."

Indications of the response include the financial contributions of the people which in many instances provided for the maintenance of the entire stay of collectors in outstate areas. Main backbone of support were the Negro people to whom the Communist tradition of struggle is an honored one. The women, the veterans and the workers also proved the correctness of the concentration policy of the national leadership of the Communist Party in outlining its drive.

Some 150,000 pieces of literature were distributed and in the course of securing the signatures some 100,000 people, it is estimated were contacted.

Among the results were: (1) realization of the readiness of the people for a mass Communist Party and setting higher sights for the recruiting campaign, (2) the entry of William Allen, Daily Worker midwest correspondent, for the post open in the coming Detroit Common Council by-election, and (3) the organization of a general victory celebration May 26.

## Worth Repeating

Stoyan Gavrilovic, Yugoslav UN delegate speaking of the necessity of American-Soviet friendship, said: "I can conceive of no greater calamity, I can conceive of no greater betrayal of the highest ideals of humanity, then the creation of circumstances working for the abandonment of the One World Concept, working for the division of the world into two antagonistic and competing blocs, and I am certain that from this general point of view too there is nothing we in Yugoslavia cherish better than the cordiality of relations between these two powerful states upon whose close understanding and unmitigated cooperation rests the peace of the world and the progress and prosperity of mankind."—Speech at American-Russian Institute dinner, May 7, 1946.