

THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

Regrouping in the Norwegian Labour Movement.

By John Pepper (Moscow).

Events of tremendous importance have taken place in the Norwegian Labour movement during the last few weeks, events which deserve the greatest attention even outside Norway.

After a good deal of turmoil, the Norwegian Labour Party, which seceded from the Communist International in 1923 under the lead of Tranmael, but has, during the years which have elapsed since then, maintained the attitude of a "Communist" party with the dictatorship of the proletariat on its programme, whilst refusing to have anything to do with the 2nd International, has now united with the Social Democratic Party. This union took place at a "Unification Congress" which had been prepared by intensive propaganda and solemnly proclaimed as the "class gathering" of the workers of Norway.

Simultaneously with this "Unification Congress", another Labour Congress was held which, attended by the Communists,

united all those elements of the working class who will have nothing to do with an alliance with Social Democracy.

The Unification Congress of the Tranmaelites was attended by 870 delegates who were said to represent 76,000 workers (in reality only 56,000). The other, the "Unification Congress of the Class Struggle" was attended by 400 delegates representing 30,000 workers. Tranmael succeeded in persuading almost all the workers of Oslo, the capital, to join the camp of united Social Democracy; in the most important industrial districts of the provinces however (Vestlandet, Bergen, Trøndelag, Møre, Frøndhjem, Telemark, Nordland) either the whole of the workers or the overwhelming majority of the Labour movement joined the "Unification Congress of the Class Struggle".

Both Congresses ended with the formation of a new party. The Norwegian Labour Party and the Social Democratic Party were united into the "Norwegian Labour party" (United Labour party), which has every right to be called the united Social Democratic Party. The other Congress founded the "Collective Party of the Working Class", which embraces the trade unions with leanings towards the Left and the Communist Party of Norway. From the point of view of organisation, both the new parties are based on the principle of the Labour party — no individual membership, but collective affiliation of whole organisations.

A new phase in the development of the Norwegian Labour movement begins with the formation of these two new parties. The two parties, the one under the ideological hegemony of the Social Democrats and the other under the spiritual leadership of the Communists, have now gathered the Norwegian Labour movement into two clearly defined camps. Thus, the division of the Norwegian Labour movement into three sections, which had prevailed hitherto, has come to an end.

The "collective idea" is particularly strong in the Norwegian working class. The deflation crisis, the growing unemployment, the brutal offensive of the capitalists who are demanding wage reductions of 25 and even 50%, the bills of the reactionary Government directed against the trade unions, are, with irresistible force, compelling the working class to close their ranks. The whole tradition of the Norwegian Labour movement works out in the direction of strengthening the "collective" tendency. In Norway, the trade unions and the political party have, for decades, been only two sides of one and the same movement. Collective membership was the prevailing form of the political party organisation.

The collective instinct in the masses of workers proved so strong that even some of the leaders of the Communist Party succumbed to it and issued the slogan that the C. P. ought to dissolve and to unite with the Tranmael party and Social Democracy at the Unification Congress. This anti-Party attitude of the liquidators (Støstad and Monsen, two parliamentarians and a few of the leading trade unionists) brought the Communist Party into an extremely dangerous position. This danger was further intensified by the fact that some of the ultra-Left elements of the Party, especially in Oslo, intimidated by the collective instinct of the masses, did everything to promote an absolute boycott of the Unification Congress, just as they had formerly opposed "on principle" the idea of founding a "Labour Party".

After detailed discussion with the Executive of the Communist International, however, our Norwegian brother Party has combated both the ultra-Left deviation and that in favour of liquidation, and has found the correct Bolshevik tactics. The Party took up an attitude of opposition to the Tranmael Unification Congress, declared its disapproval of the liquidation of the C. P., but at the same time called upon the workers to take an active part in the Unification Congress. Instead of boycotting the Unification Congress, the C. P. issued the slogan to turn the party gathering into a real class gathering. In a dictatorial way, the organisers of the Unification Congress, the so-called "Committee of Twelve" (consisting of representatives of the Social Democrats, the Tranmael party and the trade union bureaucrats) laid down certain conditions for those who wished to take part, such as the acceptance of an opportunist programme, a Reformist line of action for the trade unions, the dissolution of all special political organisations, the breaking off of all international connections. The Communist Party appealed against this dictatorial behaviour of the Committee of Twelve to the "right of self-determination" of the Labour organisations, demanded the "freedom of discussion" and the election of delegates on a "free basis". These slogans were taken up by the

workers quite beyond all expectations. No less than 250 delegates were elected by the trade unions, the unions of agricultural and forest workers, the organisations of the unemployed and the proletarian women's associations under the slogan of the "free" basis; the conditions of the Committee of Twelve being rejected. To these must be added the 150 delegates of the districts and the local organisations of the Communist Party and the young Communists.

From the beginning, the Committee of Twelve had declared that the delegates elected on a "free" basis would not be admitted to the Unification Congress. Thereupon the Communist Party organised a fight for the recognition of the "free" mandates. An "invitation committee" was formed from among the delegates which, even before the Unification Congress was opened, summoned the 400 "free" delegates to organise "a fight in common" for the recognition of their mandates. This large conference of the 400 delegates resolved to address a letter to the Unification Congress and chose a deputation which should explain the reasons for the demand that the "free" delegates and the Communist Party should be admitted to the Unification Congress. The Unification Congress received and listened to the deputation — but only after it had resolved by 800 votes to 19 not to recognise the "free" mandates. Thus, Tranmael and the Social Democrats completed the split of the forces of the proletariat before the eyes of the whole working class of Norway.

The next step of the free delegates was the inevitable result of the situation thus created. The Conference of the 400 delegates constituted itself as a special congress and later as a special party: the "Unification party of the working class". For several days the Congress discussed both the general economic and political situation of Norway and the international situation. A programme of action and resolutions were passed dealing with the following questions: unemployment, the remission of debts and a moratorium for the poor peasants; against the Norwegian trade union movement affiliating to Amsterdam and in favour of the creation of a Russian, Norwegian and Finnish trade union committee; against capitalist militarism; against the pacifist disarmament slogan and in favour of the establishment of a workers and peasants defence militia. Further, a resolution on socialist construction in Soviet Russia and against the danger of intervention, a declaration of solidarity with the great Chinese revolution; finally the demands of the youth. The programme of action of the new "Unification party of the working class" is no Communist programme, but is based on the principle of the irreconcilable class war, and pledges itself to combat the 2nd International.

By its active participation in the collective campaign, the Communist Party of Norway has achieved an important political victory.

In the following points, we can summarize the most important factors of this significant success of the C. P. of Norway.

1. By its active participation in the collective campaign, the Party has succeeded in overcoming the danger of liquidation. Not our Party, but the liquidators were liquidated. A dozen of these traitors left the Party, but as officers without troops. The Party has remained united and compact, its capability of fighting was only strengthened by the secession of the Social Democratic foreign body. Only its extremely active participation in the collective campaign made it possible smoothly to assimilate the "Mot-Dag" and the "Labour Opposition group", which recently joined the Party.

2. The influence of the Party on the masses would have been very much weakened by any tactics of boycott, whereas it was considerably strengthened by its active participation in the collective campaign. A very considerable section of the trade unions had, up to that time, remained "neutral" between the Tranmael party and the Communist Party. The Communist Party has now succeeded in wiping out the fiction of the "political neutrality" of the trade unions. The great majority of the trade unions, which had, up to now, had no political connections, have joined the new "Unification Party" of the working class, and have thus been won for active revolutionary tactics.

3. The Communist Party now has in its hands, in the most effective way, the slogan of unity. Hitherto the clever demagoguery of Tranmael has succeeded in making the Communists — in the eyes of the working class — appear responsible for all splits. The collective campaign has, for the first time, made it clear to the whole working class, that it is not the Communists but the Tranmaelists who are responsible for the split.

4. The union between the Tranmael party and Social Democracy and the simultaneous exclusion of the Communists and the free delegates is causing more and more discontent in the ranks of the Tranmaelist masses of workers. Tranmael has undertaken to lead the trade unions to Amsterdam and the new united party into the arms of the 2nd International. Friedrich Adler, the Secretary of the 2nd International, has already declared that the new united party will be affiliated to the 2nd International at its next congress. The times of Tranmael's demagogic centralist tactics have thus passed away for ever. By continuing systematically its present, wise tactics, the Communist Party will be able to break through the path to the revolutionary minded masses of workers, which has hitherto been barred by Tranmael.

5. Affiliation to the Tranmael party or political "neutrality" have hitherto been the only alternatives for the Norwegian trade unions. The formation of the new "Unification Party" of the working class, which already embraces the trade unions with a trend towards the Left, opens up to them new prospects. The Communist Party has been able to recruit for individual members and will, in the future, only accept individual members. As regards the question of the political inclusion of the trade unions, it has however nothing to oppose to the Tranmael party which is built up on the collective membership of trade unions. The foundation of the new "Unification Party of the Working Class", which is built up on collective membership, however, places before every trade union and every Labour organisation the alternative of either joining the "United Social Democratic Party" or of joining the "Unification Party of the Class Struggle".