

## UNEMPLOYED WORK

### Low Ebb of Unemployed Work Contrary to Open Letter Line

**T**HERE is a serious situation among the unemployed. It seems as though our Party comrades have read only the first part of the Open Letter, but they have not read the second part which calls for organization of the unemployed and a struggle for unemployment and social insurance. The struggle for unemployment insurance has hardly begun.

This is going to be a very bleak winter for the unemployed. I don't think it is necessary to go into any details except to say one thing: the number is hardly diminishing, but on the contrary we can expect it will increase, and the relief appropriations are continually decreasing. This is true of the Federal, State and city governments, if we can accept the statements that are made. None of the promises of N.R.A. can be fulfilled.

Our propaganda against the N.R.A. has not been concentrated in a general sense. One thing is clear: It is up to us, if the workers are not to be drawn into further illusions, but are to follow our leadership, to carry out concrete programs and concrete propaganda. That is, we must apply the facts of the codes to each city, each industry, so the workers will understand concretely how the code applies to them.

### Uneven Development of Work Because of Lack of Direction

What is the state of unemployed work? In Pittsburgh, to a lesser degree in Detroit, and to a still lesser degree in Chicago, the movement is going forward. In some districts, the situation is appalling. We are at the lowest ebb in the unemployed situation in New York. In other districts, we have practically no connections. Nevertheless, toward the West the movement is developing very well. Only recently the Washington Unemployed League, which Muste thought was his, affiliated to the Unemployed Councils together with all other organizations in the State. In Portland, Oregon, where we have a small unemployed council, two other large organizations with a membership of 8,000 to 10,000 are in existence and our organization had no knowledge of them or contact with them at all. Nevertheless Comrade Benjamin, who was making a tour of the State, was able to bring them into contact with each other and already they

have had a successful joint demonstration. In Los Angeles, where the Unemployed League claims it has 126,000 members, we had a conference whereby we brought 84 organizations of the city of Los Angeles together to plan a struggle for adequate relief and unemployment insurance. This is very important since the base of the Unemployed League in Los Angeles is the barter movement.

In certain sections some unemployed work is being done, but it receives little direction. In the South the districts are so large and scattered that the movement does not make sufficient headway. Nevertheless, the Party, I.L.D., and the Unemployed Councils play, perhaps, the leading role in the South.

We will be able to estimate the status of the movement when we say that the taking out of cards and getting stamps has slumped to a great degree. On the other hand, the Muste, the New York Socialist organization and the Borders movement in Chicago have all sagged very seriously.

Our united front has been at the top and has not penetrated down below. Our united front with Muste has been entirely at the top. Although at the convention in Columbus and Cleveland agreements were made, we have been able to get no action out of the Musteites, as far as concrete activity in the localities is concerned. Work was begun by the District in Columbus, which is the national and state center of the Muste movement, only a few weeks ago. The experience we had there should convince all comrades that if we will do work on the basis of the concrete situation we will be able to build up a united front from below.

### **Mechanical Party Control of Unemployed Councils**

On the question of the Unemployed Councils and the Party. I think there is no organization under the leadership of our Party that gets the treatment given to the Unemployed Councils. Go into any of our unions or I.L.D. branches and take an organizer out or put one in, and you will have a rebellion of the whole mass organization. But so far as the Unemployed Councils are concerned, they are "ours". We think we can remove and appoint and do exactly as we please. The organizers that we put in are responsible to the Party but have no responsibility to the masses. Second, we have a fluctuating corps of Party members in the Unemployed Council. It is time for the districts and sections to establish that a certain number of capable unemployed comrades shall have unemployed work as their only Party task. They shall remain there, work there, build up new forces and develop the organization. At the present time the membership does not know from day to day who the leadership is.

Our unions, with the exception of the marine, steel and mining,

are doing nothing. I want to ask whether unemployed work is an inherent part of our revolutionary trade union movement or not? I think our comrades do not realize what tremendous value the unemployed can be for organizing shops. We had a concrete example of this in the McKeesport strike which was successful largely because we were able to bring on the picket line thousands of workers who were unemployed in joint struggle with the employed. The failure to do this work on the part of our unions, can be a serious menace to our shop and trade union work. We have to regard the building up of the unemployed councils simultaneously with the building up of the trade unions, as of the utmost importance. In Cleveland I was informed they were trying to recruit Negro strike breakers. This is extremely serious. We may be faced with race riots because we are not carrying on sufficient work among the unemployed.

Then there is the matter of the reforestation camps and the veterans in the camps. We are doing little or no work here. In all the fascist countries, especially in Germany, such camps form the best recruiting ground for fascism. We must begin serious work in these camps.

The campaign for unemployment insurance was begun on August 5th. So far as most districts are concerned, they haven't even begun. Our fractions among the unemployed have not taken it up. This is an issue for the whole working class. I would like to know what district has formulated a plan to take the unemployment insurance campaign into the organizations and really rally support. By means of the unemployment insurance issue a mass movement can be created in every district whereby we will be able to reach mass organizations that we have not reached before. This central task is being neglected. The districts must wake up to the necessity of doing this work, or the campaign may slip out of our hands under the demagoguery of the social-fascists.

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It is necessary, above all, to instill the most complete understanding into *the whole Party* that the campaign for social insurance, alongside and including the struggle against wage-cuts with the shortened week (irrespective of whether such a short week is adopted) and the struggle for immediate aid for the unemployed, touches vitally, in addition to the anti-war campaign, the most urgent and burning interests of the proletariat, and that this campaign at the present time is the chief link to be seized to tug the whole chain, that this campaign demands the mobilization of all Party forces for a whole period of indefinite length, and that a planned, "unbroken, every-day and persistent conduct of this campaign is necessary."—*Organize Mass Struggle for Social Insurance*, by S. I. Gusev and Earl Browder.