

Yellow Journal "Communism"

by Ben Gitlow

The Paterson strike helped to expose the dilemma in which the official Party leadership found itself when its policies just did not work. Even before the strike took place, these leaders sensed that in a struggle of ideas, tactics and policies, they would not be convincing. They therefore embarked upon a campaign to discredit their opponents. They concentrated against the Communist Party (Majority Group), which was developing the united front tactics in Paterson and which as a result would certainly play the leading role in the strike. Calumny would be too mild a word to describe the campaign of attack which was initiated. Ideas, facts, the truth, were cast aside; lies, slander, the wildest exaggerations and false charges were made in a frantic attempt to discredit the Communists who were organizing workers and leading them militantly in a struggle against the bosses. A Communist movement must depend upon facts and must advance with truth. But in Paterson we witnessed the most flagrant violation of this.

In the United States we have the special institution of "yellow journalism." It is held in great contempt by the thinking workers and has always been fought. Nevertheless, the official press of the Communist Party, as I will prove in this article, not only drank deep from the vile cup of yellow journalism, but became so drunk with its spirit that it outdid yellow journalism itself.

In the Socialist party, before the organization of the Communist Party, we had a development of yellow journalism in the Jewish *Forward*. The membership fought most bitterly against the *Forward*. It was held in contempt and became an adjective to describe what was most rotten, unreliable, opportunistic and despicable in the Socialist movement. Nevertheless, the official press of the Communist Party dealing with the Paterson strike, has exceeded the bounds of the *Forward* in its excesses of yellow journalism. The quotations I will now give should make every member of the Communist Party hold his head in shame. It should also arouse his indignation. It should lead to such

a protest in the Party ranks that an end to such despicable, harmful practices will be made.

Here are some gems of the vituperative art of yellow journalism:

When the amalgamation of the United Textile Workers and the Associated Silk Workers was being carried thru in order to bring about greater unity in a drive to organize the silk workers, The *Daily Worker* of July 15, 1931 treated the matter as follows:

"The Associated Silk Workers and the United Textile Workers in Paterson are merging their forces together with the Musteites and Lovestonites with the intention of providing a strike-breaking agency for the bosses in the strike."

When the amalgamation was actually carried out the *Daily Worker* of July 22, 1931 stated:

"This is a maneuver of the A. F. of L. and the Musteites for which the Musteites received \$3,000 from the Garland Fund upon the request of Benjamin Gitlow the Communist renegade. This is the activity of Louis Budenz, who was present at the meeting and engineered this action which is open strike-breaking."

To bring about greater unity thru amalgamation according to the *Daily Worker* is "strike-breaking."

On July 27, 1931 the following blast appeared in the *Daily Worker*:

"Renegade gives support to Paterson Strike Breakers—Gitlow in vicious attack against National Textile Workers Union—Benjamin Gitlow, secretary of the Communist Party (Majority Group), a group of expelled leaders from the Communist Party, has come to the assistance of the silk and dye manufacturers of Paterson."

This was a two column blast full of invective, scurrilous remarks, calumny, lies, misinformation—in fact, everything used in the art of yellow journalism. It continues:

"The workers who are coming out on strike realize who are the breakers of the strike, the Associated and the U.T.W. officials assisted by Benjamin Gitlow and the Musteites. Gitlow received \$3,000 for this dirty job from the Garland Fund and now is trying to deliver the goods."

The *Daily Worker* doesn't bother about the truth at all. The Garland Fund voted \$3,000 for a united front drive to organize the silk workers of Paterson. They never gave Gitlow one cent. Part of the money was turned over during the strike to the finance committee of the strike and never to Gitlow. It was one donation

of the Garland Fund that helped to unify and organize workers.

But let us continue to examine the *Daily Worker* art of journalism:

"August 3 is a strike-breaking day. August 3, or as Gitlow proposed July 27, is a strike-breaking day. If, as is now declared, the Associated will call a strike on July 28, it will likewise be a strike-breaking day. The strike has been on since July 22 and the Associated and U. T. W., with the assistance of the renegade from Communism Gitlow and the Musteites, have been consciously strike-breaking in this way acting as stool-pigeons of the bosses in the ranks of the working class."

What called out the frothing at the mouth on the part of the *Daily Worker*. The *Daily Worker* answers its blast on page 2 by its blast on page 3 of the same issue. I quote:

"In a vicious attack against the National Textile Workers Union and directly aiding the United Textile Workers strike-breaking, sell-out schemes, Benjamin Gitlow, renegade from the Communist movement and secretary of the self-styled Lovestone Majority Group, injected himself in the Paterson Strike situation as an open strike-breaker."

"The strike-breaking declaration of Gitlow was to the effect that the National Textile Workers Union was to be condemned for not uniting in the U. T. W. and Associated officials in their betrayal plan."

That was the crime: to demand unity and one strike. For such a Communist crime I want to be repeatedly convicted.

July 29, 1931, the *Daily Worker* characterizes the strike call as follows:

"A strike call by the Associated and U.T.W. is clearly a call to betray the workers."

The *Daily Worker* of August 7, in its frantic journalistic gymnastics, in an effort to inflame a mob spirit in Paterson among the few workers following it, writes the following:

"Word has been received that the stool pigeons in Paterson who are trying to get information on who are members of the Communist Party, who are foreign-born elements, and other information of interest to the police go regularly to Gitlow, Zimmerman and Keller for identification of any outstanding individuals working with the strikers of the National Textile Workers Union. Gitlow knows them all."

At what fountain did the editors of the *Daily Worker* draw their information? Policies that require such vicious lynch-inspiring damnable lies cannot stand up. They did not. They collapsed with the whole structure of abuse, calumny, lies and imaginary journalistic claptrap that was invented to support them.

I have not the space to quote the foreign language press of the Communist Party and the other journals, magazines, bulletins, etc., that make up a hideous, shameful picture of yellow journal "Communism." I will just end by quoting from an article written by Israel Amter, secretary of the N. Y. district of the Communist Party, member of the Central Committee of the Party. It appeared in the September 1931 issue of *Solidarity*, the official organ of the Workers International Relief. Amter once aspired to be a composer. He attempted to think up beautiful tunes and melodious notes. Here are the startling facts conjured up in the mind of Amter and dished out as the truth.

The strike, according to him, was a grand scheme on the part of the bosses. I quote:

"Therefore, the bosses, the mayor, the Chamber of Commerce and the labor fakers got on the job. In Paterson there were two other unions—the Associated Silk Workers and the completely discredited United Textile Workers Union, which actually had no membership but a fake executive board. These two organizations and their masters recognized what this strike meant. The bosses knew that the strike would embrace the great mass of the silk and dye workers, and the best maneuver on their part would be to split the movement, if this could be done."

"The renegades from the Communist Party—Lovestone, Gitlow and Co.—the Musteites (Muste, Budenz, etc.) and the reactionary officialdom of the U. T. W. and the Associated were the agents in the working class that offered their services for splitting the strike—for breaking the strike. Mr. Gitlow, who had obtained \$3,000 from the Garland Fund for breaking the strike, insisted upon unity between the Associated and the U. T. W.—to put forward a fake united organization and to remove the stain of strike-breaking from the U. T. W. amalgamation of these two organizations took place, and then the united body, affiliating to the A. F. of L., declared that it would call a strike on August 3."

"The bosses realized that the reactionary leaders of the A. F. of L. could do nothing with the workers of Paterson who have a revolutionary tradition. Hence, they sent in more renegades from the Communist Party—Gitlow, Miller, both Zimmermans, Weisbord, Keller, Lifshitz. They imported gangsters from New York. Gitlow was to give the 'revolutionary' face to the workers to cover up the strike-breaking activities of the A. F. of L. while the reactionary A. F. of L. leaders were negotiating with the silk manufacturers for the sell-out of the strike. Weisbord was to pretend agreement with the National Textile Workers and then attempt to demoralize its ranks. Gitlow, Lifshitz, as part of the A. F. of L. machine, now accept the role of American imperialism. They not only declare that the A. F. of L. is the only bona-fide labor movement and that the Trade Union Unity League and its militant unions are a destructive element, but they march in a parade each with an American flag in his hand. Just like the American Legion and Ku Klux Klan!"

"On the contrary, the spirit of the workers remains high, they have learned the lessons of correct policy of the militant industrial unions against the sell-out strike-breaking policy of the American Federation of Labor with its Musteites, Gitlow stab-in-the-back methods."

All the myths that have been invented about the American flag are lies. One writer in the *Daily Worker* charged Gitlow with "tearing down the red flag and stamping upon it."

It would all be too ridiculous if it were not so tragic. This is what the present trade union policy of the officialdom of the Communist Party leads to. More astounding than this yellow journal "Communism" is that the membership of the Party remains quiet, does not protest, does not fight to make a change. In the S.P. before the organization of the Communist Party, we fought most bitterly against the yellow journalism of the *Forward*. Communists who are more than just members will have to fight against policies which demand in their defense such methods of journalistic support.

Three Years Of Sectarianism

SOME RESULTS OF THE NEW COURSE

by B. Herman

Those retaining any doubts as to the necessity of carrying on a determined, principled struggle to change the sectarian line, the ultra-left policies of the Communist Party need only to read the article on the "Fluctuation in Membership" in the last issue of the *R.I.L.U. Magazine* (Dec. 1, 1931), the official organ of the Red International of Labor Unions.

The article states that the membership of the American T.U.U.L. was, in July 1931, some 30,000 and "as compared only with 1930 the loss of membership amounts to nearly 50%." We will analyze the figures and show that the figures of 30,000 is a wild exaggeration, to put it mildly. It is significant that this terrific loss of 50% in one year, as admitted by the R.I.L.U., occurs during a period which it characterizes as one of "revolutionary upsurge and general and widespread radicalization of the masses." How to explain this contradiction is quite a problem. The explanation offered thus far is that the Party "lags behind the radicalized masses." When the Party finally catches up (it has been trying pretty hard the last two and a half years), then things will be different, we are told. At a rate of 50% loss in one year one can calculate how long it will take to "catch up!"

Granting even 30,000 members, this number is totally insignificant in comparison with the masses which the T.U.E.L. once led in struggle against the reactionary bureaucrats, numbering scores of thousands in the U.M.W. of A. in the "Save the Union Movement," in the left wing in the needle trades, etc. In comparison with that, the loss of 50% is hardly noticeable.

Let us examine the figures of the R.I.L.U. on the membership of the T.U.U.L. for 1931:

1. National Miners Union 1,850
2. National Textile Workers (of these 500 pay no dues) 1,850

3. Needle Trades Industrial Union 7,500
4. Industrial Seamen's Union 14,000
5. Auto Workers Union 175
6. Leather Workers Union (Union broke up after incapably conducted strike) 450
7. Food Workers Union 1,900
8. Jewelry Workers League 60
9. Union of Building Workers and Lumbermen 1,000
10. League of Timber Workers —
11. Agricultural Laborers League 800
12. League of Rubber Workers —
13. Metal Workers League 600
14. Railway Workers Union 300

The wild exaggeration in the above figures is quite obvious. Almost half, 14,000, are in the Marine Workers Industrial Union. This figure is so padded that if the last two zeros were left off, no one would consider it an error, or an underestimation, quite the contrary! The figure of 7,500 for the Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union is inflated like a toy balloon. The process of deflation takes well over two-thirds off the claimed membership of the T.U.U.L. It is claimed that "20,000 persons joined the union during the last miners strike" but no one claims, even if the figures were true, that they are members today.

The losses are so great, the bankruptcy so glaring, that not even the R.I.L.U. is able to fail to see it. In self-defense it puts the blame upon the T.U.U.L., its absence of work in the A.F. of L., its wrong attitude to the A.F. of L., regarding the 3,000,000 workers therein as a "hopeless element for the class struggle," etc. With this question, the so-called "turns" in the Party line, we have already dealt and will deal further in another issue.

In France the losses are described as "huge." The metal workers have lost in the recent period more than 50%, the miners 45%, and the textile workers 14%.

In Germany, where some gains are claimed (minute gains in a situation that calls for colossal advances), eight Red trade unions have been organized and it is reported with great elation that the ninth—a metal workers union in the lower Rhine—is now in the process of organization. This is the answer to the lessons of the American dual trade union centre, the T.U.U.L.—the unabated continuation of the splitting course in a country like Germany, where the conservative unions have far greater membership than in America and where the sectarian course of the Party will have even more ruinous consequences than in the American T.U.U.L. in proportion to the greater size and importance of the German mass organizations.

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dence noticeable of improved sentiment despite the passing of the Hoover Reconstruction Bill. So desperate is the rural situation that from agricultural sections and towns east of the Mississippi only, about 1,000,000 workers migrated to 52 of the countries biggest cities. The sharpening of the debt and reparations crisis has served to bring about further instability into the international situation.