

On the Carrying Out of the 13th Plenum Decisions

WEAKNESSES IN OUR UNEMPLOYED WORK

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(From his recent pamphlet "Unemployment and the Tasks of the Communists." Just published by the Workers Library Publishers; price 15 etc.)

THE unemployed workers' movement cannot yet be considered a mass movement—if we take into consideration the enormous number of persons without work; there are thousands in the unemployed workers' movement, but there are millions of unemployed.

There is a dangerous gap between the struggles of the workers in employment and the unemployed. In Germany enthusiastic demonstrations of the unemployed are continually taking place, but there are no strikes of any great importance. The struggle of the unemployed is not always supported by means other than strikes of workers engaged in industry. In Witerfeld (an industrial town in Middle Germany) for example, during a period of four weeks (in April and May) the unemployed carried on a struggle against a reduction in the scale of relief. They besieged the town hall and twice succeeded in getting their unemployment benefits on the old scale. When the police interfered during the third siege of the town hall, the unemployed did not fall back but continued their struggle, in spite of conflicts with the police, but since the movement obtained no support from these engaged in industry, it broke down.

In England, France, and, to a lesser degree, in the United States, on the other hand, big strikes frequently occur, but there is an almost complete absence of demonstrations and other forms of struggle on the part of the unemployed.

This sort of thing is very dangerous, for the bourgeoisie and the reformists can more easily deal with each movement separately than they could if the two movements—of the unemployed and employed—proceed simultaneously.

Finally, the unemployed organizations—committees and councils of unemployed in the majority of cases work extremely badly.

All this can be explained by the fact that the Communist Parties, Red Trade Unions and Trade Union opposition work badly and much too little among the unemployed.

Despite the fact that in the parties and organizations indicated there are sufficient forces available, the work has been, and is still, carried on among the unemployed in general, and not chiefly among the entirely destitute sections of the unemployed—and it is to this section that the majority of the unemployed belong.

In the work among the unemployed, the organization of demonstrations and processions has always predominated, and still predominates, without this method of work being linked up with the organic, permanent activities of the committees and councils of unemployed, such as fighting against eviction of unemployed, against the introduction of new rationalizing measures and a longer working day in the factories, which throw ever-growing armies of new workers on to the streets; the organization of demonstrations

is not linked up with the creation of children's dining-rooms, with the organization of a systematic continuous powerful pressure upon State and municipal institutions with a view to getting from them temporary assistance for unemployed or aiming at the introduction of unemployment insurance, the organization of the unemployed to help in strikes of workers in the factories, and so on.

In a word, the demonstrations are not linked up with the organic, persistent, day-to-day work on all questions which might be of interest to the broad masses of unemployed and the employed. In this connection it should be mentioned that the slogans of the Communist Parties and the revolutionary trade union movement are frequently too abstract and incomprehensible, and defeat their own ends in mobilizing the unemployed and drawing the broad masses of unemployed into the movement.

The relations existing between the revolutionary trade union movement and the unemployed workers' movement have also not helped to broaden the unemployed workers' movement. In England a National Unemployment Workers' Committee has existed for many years, but until recently it has not had either formal or actual connection with the Minority Movement and the struggles of the workers. In Germany, until quite recently, the unemployed workers' movement was attached to the trade union opposition, and in America it was attached to the weak red trade union, which are few enough in number. The association with the "red trade unions" and "revolutionary trade union opposition" drove away the unemployed who belonged to other political parties and to the reformist, catholic and other trade union organizations.

Joint Action of the Employed and the Unemployed

In the development of joint action of the employed and the unemployed, little progress has been made. While the unemployed workers have in almost all cases fought side by side with the employed workers in strikes, the mobilization of the employed to fight for the demands of the unemployed has made little progress. Only in the miners' strike did we put forward joint demands for the strikers and the unemployed in the hunger marches organized. The fight for the 7 hour day, the struggle against rationalization and the stagger plan, has not been pressed forward. In the fight for the unemployed in only a few instances did we develop demands for part-time workers. The fight against forced labor (which is increasing on Government work) and the maintenance of union rates on all jobs, has received little attention.

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