

PROLETARIAN BULLETIN

M A Y, 1933.

COMRADES:

As we announced in the last Bulletin the National Executive Committee decided to postpone the National Convention until Labor Day. Since then the N.E.C. has also decided that the pre-convention discussion shall be continued until August first.

The May issue of Proletarian News was gotten out with the usual difficulty. However, by borrowing a few dollars for parcels post we got the bundles to the main locals, even as far as Boston by May 1st. The single copies had to lie in headquarters until the 9th before money was available for postage. On the 8th there was just one cent in the Press Fund. The reason for giving these details is because some Comrades think that it is only through neglect that the single copies don't go out sooner. Today, May 12th, there is one dollar in the Press Fund, and the paper for this bulletin is being bought with borrowed money.

Locals should make a vigorous effort to sell the paper and settle promptly, and also go after subscriptions. A systematic subscription drive should be put on by every Local. Proletarian News must be kept going.

PRE- CONVENTION DISCUSSION

Criticism

(by C.M.O'Brien / Local Los Angeles)

Suppose a modern Marxist from Africa or India or China should arrive here and look over the different parties to determine which one he should join, he would naturally be on the alert to detect that social-democratic trend that has poisoned the revolutionary movement and committed such terrible crimes against the whole working class.

Suppose he should read Comrade John Schachinger's article in the March 1933 Bulletin. We would say "If this is true what a magnificent local Detroit has and what a shame that its activities should be hampered by the Editorial Board and by the National Secretary. The rest of the Party, or most of it, must be of a much poorer type otherwise they would not tolerate such backward officials."

As a Marxist he would seek concrete evidence, he would

seek concrete evidence. He would inquire if that militant local was so neglectful in sending its quote to support the national office and the Party paper that it had to receive strong pleas and telegrams for money, or if that only applied to the less militant locals. He would get a file of the Party paper to read the theoretical articles contributed by the members of local Detroit so as to ascertain whether or not that local was competent to publish a local paper in the name of the Party and give a Marxian explanation of the day to day struggle. He would get a file of those papers that Comrade Schachinger was active in starting, and also those two German papers that he was reporter and representative of to see how the Marxian view is presented to the workers in a way that is not of a "tiresome style of academic analysis."

Of course he would also try to find out how many of the large mass of workers in this country that read German belong to revolutionary organizations and what is the standard of their Marxism. As a Marxian he would not be satisfied with quantity only. He would investigate the assumption that if the National Secretary would do more "actual organization work" the Party would have money to publish a weekly and a quarterly.

He would seek for consistency, not merely since the crisis but, particularly during that whole decade of terrible demoralization of the revolutionary movement, due to unparalleled capitalist prosperity, when most any worker could get a job most any time. He would be highly interested in knowing who kept the Marxian banner flying from the beginning to the end of that long period of vicious reaction. Why was it then, more than now, wrote strong pleas and telegrams to the comrades to send money to get out another issue of the paper and to buy postage to mail it. He would find that the Comrades who did least and gave least for the party were then, with a few exceptions, buying real-estate, the latest model car and radio, that some speculated in the stock market while others were trying to see how much money they could get into the bank before it went broke.

Each will have to form their own opinion as to what conclusions the modern Marxian from afar would arrive at. Nevertheless, Comrade Schachinger correctly calls our attention to the very spot that needs our best attention, the national center of the Party. But, he recommends only patches. He did not touch upon the low theoretical level. That reason is not far to seek. Local Detroit is the most guilty of the long established locals in this relation. The awful strain on our leader, the National Secretary, during all those years, when "tired reds" and ex-union members increased as never before, broke his health. Though he continued to do most of the organizing work for the whole party, his broken health prevented him from at the same time keeping pace with theoretical development. When the leaders, or leader, the center, gets behind theoretically, the whole Party suffers. The surface sores that Comrade Schachinger calls attention to are the result.

If the Party has a member whose theoretical level is equal to the needs of the movement, who has a record for consistency, or sufficient of a record to strongly indicate that quality, who is not worn-out, but has abundance of energy and the necessary qualities of efficiency, that member should become our National Secretary. Comrade Keracher should be elected member of the N.E.C. and organizer for our Party.

If we have not got such a member (I do not know of one) then we must supply the present National Secretary with an

assistant, to do the detail work, so he can catch up and keep up with the theoretical development of Marxism.

The same applies to the N.E.C. only not to the same extent. The mental poverty of the present N.E.C. and its E.C. is manifest not only in the few instances that Comrade Schachinger relates. We did not submit even one tentative thesis or resolution on which the Party could enter its pre-convention discussion. Two issues of the pre-convention Bulletin and two-thirds of the pre-convention discussion period gone by, and only one member of the N.E.C. (Comrade Bielskas) has a solitary suggestion to offer to the Party. These members of the N.E.C. who forced this convention on the Party have not told the membership why? The reason is already stated. They probably hope to learn something from the members during the discussion but they have nothing to offer to the members. Probably they are preparing a "new-deal" to spring by surprise on the delegates in the convention, as happened at our last convention. New deals appear to be one of the characteristics of decline.

Now, on the other hand, in electing its new officers, the party should guard against that mushroom irresponsibility, smart type, of which Comrade Bergstrom's article in the March Bulletin is a fair sample. About three years ago he joined the Party. For a short time before he was flirting with the movement. The first year or more in the Party he was working days and going to night school, so had little time to learn from the Party. He has been six months in Alaska away from the movement and has had very little opportunity for theoretical study. He has looked into Capital Vol. I. He has seen the covers of Vol. II and III. He has read and studied a few of the pamphlets. He is not familiar with the writings of Dietzgen, or Lenin's book on philosophical materialism, or Stalin's Leninism. He has read a few pamphlets of Lenin's writings and in the last few months has made considerable progress. But it has swelled his head, and what might have been a useful article is overloaded with subtle and open smart cracks.

This, less than one-eighth ripe Marxian theorist, almost devoid of experience in the labor movement, who has read very little of its history and who has not had time to efficiently co-ordinate the few crumbs he has gathered, says to the majority of the members of the best Marxian party in America, and particularly to its most experienced and best informed members who influence its policy, your program of two years ago;" needs to be taken to the dentist to have its teeth fixed; or, if the dentist cannot do the job, let us consult a blacksmith." I leave it to the members to judge whether that is a Marxian attitude, or petty-bourgeois egotism. No doubt two years of rich experience will enable us to alter and improve our program.

-----000000-----

More About Comrade Bergstrom's Article
In the March Bulletin. (by C.M.O'Brien, Local Los Angeles)

Comrade Bergstrom says;" To justify the claim of being a Marxian Party requires first, a thorough understanding of Marxism) So far as I am informed such a party never has existed. Experience has shown that the Bolsheviki Party had the most thorough understanding.

And, "No working class party fully understands the psychology of the American workers----" Did the Bolsheviks "fully understand the psychology" of the Russian workers? It is true that they had "

best understanding. "... the program of the last convention needs to be taken to the dentist to have its teeth fixed ; or, if the dentist cannot do the job, let us consult a blacksmith " Bergstrom recommends that we consult, not a Marxist, but a dentist or blacksmith. Not any particular kind, for there might be a dentist or blacksmith who are Marxists. It happens that politically most of them are democrats or republicans.

What kind of teeth does he recommend to put in our program? One of them is "five-day week and six-hour-day", but not a word about pay. With the labor market so terribly overstocked the bosses will readily accept that kind of a tooth and reduce the pay accordingly. That is a milk tooth. Nay! more, it is a false tooth. Anyhow it is not Marxian.

The fact that Marx and Engels in their "Communist Manifesto" did not specify any particular demands (or to be smart "teeth") shows that, even if such were necessary now, Bergstrom's quotation from the "Manifesto" does not strengthen his argument. It says; "The Communists fight for the attainment of the immediate aims.." That is exactly what the P.P is doing.

-----oooooooo-----

The Press And The Party

(by John Davis, Local Flint)

The Press is the voice of the Party. It can be loud or soft, clear as a bell, or hoarse as an old bull frog, but the substance of what is said will be a recording of the quality of the Party. If the Party is confused regarding its organizational purpose, the Press, if controlled by the Party, will transcribe that confusion no matter how appealingly the contents may be written. On the other hand clarity of expression will be characteristic of the Press of a Party that knows its job and how to do it.

Much criticism of the Pro News is evident within the ranks of the Party. As far as the business end is concerned that criticism can best be answered by the officers who have been conducting the various departments responsible.

The first expression of dissatisfaction, in the Bulletin, is voiced by Com Schachinger, I do not however, intend to deal with that article specifically, only, I cannot refrain from mentioning, in plain unequivocal language that I consider his vague unsupported reference to the integrity of the N. Sec. rather "lousy". His plea is for a lighter paper, "dealing with the everyday struggle of the workers", and, "more news about current events." Theoretical discussion, which is evidently thought of as being distinct from the everyday struggles and problems of the workers, is to be relegated to some kind of quarterly. Personally, I am of the opinion that if the weekly he mentions is to be similar to the "American Freeman", the "Detroit Leader", or the "Michigan Worker", it should be the other way around. Four times a year, even, would be too often.

Contents of a Party Press.

The primary function of an ordinary news paper is to report news, or rather news significant to, and in conformity with, ###

a definite editorial policy. In the case of the Capitalist press news reports are doctored, suppressed, or given emphasis according to their bearing on the class struggle; the governing principle is the class interest of the capitalist. Ostensibly the reverse holds true for the workers press. However, many supposedly working class papers are in reality dominated by the general ideology of capitalism. At least, most workers publications are concerned chiefly with the "everyday struggles and problems of the workers", or they claim that distinction. A news paper can be subsidised by the interests it serves, or it can be run on a paying basis. This can by no means be said about the majority of workers papers, at any rate the outspoken revolutionary kind. It is therefore necessary for the members of the Party issuing the paper to constantly subsidise it by contributing to press funds, etc. Because of the financial restraint (a chronic condition) a tendency is always manifest seeking to lighten the contents of the paper in order to appeal to the workers who are used to the appealing methods and entertaining subtlety of the newspapers of capitalism, to get their support, and consequently attain a self-supporting basis. In other words, reduces the paper to conform with the low level of class consciousness carefully fostered by the capitalist news papers, which prevails almost until the eve of the revolution. This tendency is to be guarded against.

A great deal of the efforts of the old Social Democratic press are aimed at emotively appealing to the workers, telling about the misery of unemployment, the starving babies and so forth, with a view to waking them to a realization of the need for a change. The actual every day experiences in all capitalist countries are amply demonstrating the need for that change. It is said, "Something has got to be done." The vote for a new deal last fall marks how far the American workers have progressed in the process of seeking a way out. However, the striving will be more and more pronounced in the future. It is our concern to guide this force into revolutionary channels, to impregnate an ever growing mass, the best, most far seeing elements, within the working class, with at least the rudiments of sound Marxian theory, to point the road to be traversed. Some criticism of the construction of the articles contained in the paper devoted to this end would be legitimate, they may be badly written, that is a matter of training, but the theoretical content will have to be there, in fact the degree of clarity in thought will make for clarity of expression.

It is important that we develop many capable comrades, specialists who can write on the "everyday struggles of the workers" convincingly, not merely reporting those struggles but analysing them in the light of Marxian theory, pointing to the lessons to be learned.

It would be fine to have many papers, dailies, weeklies and so on. That, however, is not possible in the immediate future. Let us then devote the one paper we can support to make sound revolutionists, not merely rebellious working men. In this connection there are no "light" or "heavy" articles, only good or bad, well written and thought out or badly written and confused. We cannot appraise the work our press is doing by measuring its appeal to the workers. The effect of a paper is not felt immediately, in the same way as the stirring appeal of a virulent leaflet or pamphlet. The reader assimilates the written ideas and in his own way transmits them to other workers, in conversation and in discussion of everyday problems. Understanding this, it is necessary that those ideas be firmly grounded in correct revolutionary theory.

Press the Reflex of the Quality of the Party.

The Party membership is made up of individuals varying considerably in their understanding, this is to a large measure reflected in varying ability. It is natural that the best element should rise to the executive positions. The N.E.C, for instance, is composed of the best informed comrades selected at the conventions to direct the activities of the organization. The press comes under their jurisdiction. The material subscribed is written by comrades specializing in the subject treated. In this way the level of revolutionary knowledge constantly tends to rise. This process is further linked up with other educational activities, classes, forums, etc., the sum total of which is a continuous raising of the least informed to a level with the best. This is very desirable as it leads to that unity of purpose so necessary in the conduct of the struggle, unity based on a scientific understanding.

I too consider our paper is much too small, and the irregularity of issue is very unfortunate, but it would be childish to indiscriminately blame the officials. These weaknesses are results of deficiency in the Party, which will have to be remedied. The members will have to get under and help support the paper by a subsidy to increase its size, quality, and regularity of issue. It would be just as opportunistic to allure the support of the workers by "lightening" the quality of the paper as it would be to drape our platform with "immediate demands" for the same object. No doubt we could grow faster by learning those tricks and practicing them, but the basis on which we would build would be the sand of reformism. At this time especially, when the foundation is being worked on, it is extremely necessary to temper the steel well. Many treatises on correct revolutionary theory will be needed.

What Is Revolutionary Theory?

It is a generalization of the experiences of the working class in every country in their struggles with capitalism. A correct analysis of past struggles makes clear the weaknesses in workers weapons. We learn our lessons from this analysis in order to modify the weapons we have to use, sharpen and strengthen them. In this case our job is the building of the Proletarian Party. It is a hard job Comrades. Only a strong structure will withstand the storms of the future. That structure can be built, and we will do it.

-----ooco-----

Our Party Leadership.
(by C.M.O'Brien, Local Los Angeles)

Marxism, the science of society and proletarian revolution, is the most complex subject that has ever engaged the mind. The building of a Marxian party is, therefore, the most difficult task ever attempted.

The nature of the class struggle requires and produces leaders, not over-night or by accident, but by long persistent test. The leaders chosen by even the best informed membership should be the best informed, most experienced and consistent, with Marxian executive and literary ability, and abundance of energy. The first two without the third (consistency) is very

dangerous. The last one (energy) without the others is even more dangerous.

Experience has shown that individuals with all of these qualities are very rare. The Bolsheviki Party had only one Lenin with a fairly close second, Stalin. Trotsky and Zinoviev are well informed, have plenty of experience and literary ability and energy. But they are short on consistency and Marxian executive ability.

At least a majority of the leaders should be those who conform most ~~#####~~ closely to the above qualifications. The minority could be those who show possibilities.

To expect a party the size of ours, that has never experienced an uprising or rebellion, to say naught of revolution, to have a majority of 15 qualified and a minority with possibilities, is to expect what does not exist. Even when we had only seven N.E.C members, most of us were not qualified. Because our small party is scattered over a wide territory, we increased our N.E.C to 15, with the hope that the responsibility of leadership would stimulate the development of a larger number.

The result is not very great. Either because they did not have the ability or the opportunity, or, if they had either, or both, they did not make the best use of them. Even if we were all qualified the expense for all of us to meet two or more times between conventions is a waste of Party money. Therefore, I propose that at the next convention we reduce our N.E.C to seven members. With democratic centralism only vaguely understood, the most qualified can be chosen only by the greatest caution.

-----000000-----

Immediate Demands, Etc.

(by Wm. Heinhuis, Local Elkhart)

The pre-convention discussion has for its purpose the opening of the opinion of the members of the Party in regard to the policy that the Party must pursue. We must approach this question with an open mind, free from known prejudices and without being hampered by the traditions of earlier associations. It is my contention that the new comer in the working class movement, has, in many instances, a decided advantage over many veterans of former organizations. Marx's statement, regarding the traditions of the past, is as applicable to members of working class organizations, as it is to all others.

The question of "immediate demands" has caused no end of discussion. Some members contend that the Party must adopt a few of these demands, in order that it may grow. These comrades admit that we must not choose such demands indiscriminately. Select one or two good ones, add them to our program, and, presto, we are on the way of becoming a mass Party. How simple!

Let us, for a moment, stop and examine the nature of our organization. We claim to accept the political teachings of Marx and Engels. Also, we are well versed in Marxian economics. We understand the wage-system, how wealth is produced, how appropriated and why it is that, in the immense majority of cases, if not in all,

the offspring of a wage-worker, become wage-workers and why the children of capitalists continue to function in the capacity of their parents. We maintain that the only way this inequality can be eliminated is to eliminate the economic system that causes it. The aim of the P.P is the abolition of capitalism. It has, and should have, no other. We have "inscribed upon our banners", "The abolition of the wage-system". Nothing else will help the working class. That this is the correct revolutionary position to take, not even the most rabid "immediate demander" will deny.

While granting the above, those who sponsor "immediate demands" hold that the Party can add to its members by advocating certain reforms that the workers want. Certain examples are given, for instance, a six-hour day and unemployment insurance. The A.F. of L. has advocated these two demands for a long time, but has that organization derived any benefit therefrom? I say it has not. Some may counter by saying that the workers have no faith in the weak-kneed leadership of the A.F. of L. Such arguments sound strange in the mouths of Marxists. As Marxists they know that the leadership of an organization reflects the sentiment of the majority of the membership. That the rank and file may be educated to think along the lines the leadership desires, does not alter the fact. Before they could be educated, they had to make themselves susceptible to this propaganda. The C.P. is now advocating a seven-hour day. In the past it has circulated petition after petition, demanding unemployment insurance, but without any results. I am making these points to show that there is no widespread demand, on the part of the masses, for these two reforms.

However, let us suppose that in the future the sentiment in favor of these reforms should become great, could not, and would not, the Party then offer its support? Such would be our duty. But, at the same time we could advise the workers that such reforms would not solve their problems. In my opinion this is the correct tactic for a revolutionary party. It complies with the quotation from the "Communist Manifesto", viz; "The Communists fight for the attainments of the immediate demands", etc. Let us examine this question carefully. It states that the communists fight for these demands. To me, the word fight and advocate have different meanings. To offer this quotation in support of "immediate demands" is risky. Read what principle Marx and Engels laid down in the fourth paragraph of Chap. 2 of the "Communist Manifesto" (P. 30)

"Immediate demands", when they have for their aim reforms, have no place in a revolutionary program. To advocate them is to cancel the revolutionary position. To use them as drawing cards is exceedingly dangerous, inasmuch as we then have no way of knowing how the organization will stand in a crisis. Far better to be unable to build a revolutionary party, than to build an organization that is built upon false premises. The convention should, early in its sessions, reject all proposals relating to immediate demands and devote its time to matters of vital importance.

Chief among these is the adoption of a more explicit constitution. This will go a long way toward perfecting the Party. We must have more discipline. This applied to officers as well as lay members. By discipline I do not mean blind obedience of

orders coming from above. I here refer to a self imposed sense of duty, not only in relation to the big things, but also to the minor affairs of the Party, such as answering letters, attending meetings, etc. The Party, as constituted today could not cope with a sudden increase of membership, should the possibility for this present itself. Far less would it be able to handle a revolutionary situation. No use of us kidding ourselves into believing that we are the vanguard of the working class. We might be a small vanguard of the vanguard, but no more.

During this stage of the preparation we must give the educational program of the Party most of our attention. A systematic course of study must be prescribed. Suggestions must be offered, especially to new locals, how to facilitate the study of Marxian literature. Set rules and regulations should be laid down for all classes and locals must learn to adhere to them. Study classes should be organized in such a manner that a Party member will know how to conduct himself no matter in what locality he attends a class. Our appeal is made to the better element of the working class. Loosely conducted meetings and classes do not imbue prospective members with respect for the Party.

At present the progress of the Party is slow, and, for the time being, it will probably remain slow. Our methods are not emotional: we are appealing to the intelligence of those who will lend their ear. If it were our purpose to build up a following with the intention of scaring the capitalists into getting off our backs, emotional methods might suffice. But we know, or at least should know, that to resort to intimidation is futile. The capitalists have at their disposal plenty of means whereby they can inform themselves of the conditions of the Party. We might be able to fool the workers, but we cannot fool the capitalists. Whatever the Party hopes to accomplish, it will have to do because it has superior strength. We must build on a firm foundation. This foundation is now being built. In its construction we must use painstaking care, lest it give way when it is called upon to support the building. To some the methods used by the Party may be too slow; to use the metaphor, they wish to rear the building upon a make-shift and unstable foundation.

Today our movement is decidedly unpopular. It may remain so until the eve of the revolution, but this possibility should not deter us. How to strengthen the existing organization, to effect means to hold and consolidate our gains and to place the Party on a businesslike basis, these questions should, at the coming convention, receive due consideration.

-----000000-----

We hope to be able to send second section of this Bulletin soon, with more pre-convention discussion and also financial reports.
