

Communists Must Show Way In Fall Election Campaign

Amter Says, 'We Must Prove That We Are Just as Intent on Electing Communist Spokesmen for the Masses as We Are to Win a Strike, to Gain More Relief'

By I. Amter

This year, as never before, the Communists must throw themselves with full energy into the election campaign. Although only municipal and state elections will be held (in New York, elections to the Board of Aldermen and State Assembly), nevertheless the campaign is regarded by leading politicians as a runner-up for the national elections of next year.

The masses are in ferment. This is affecting every section of the population—workers, farmers, veterans, unemployed, professionals, white collar workers, small businessmen. The crisis continues and is wearing down the working population. Unemployment, even according to the National Industrial Conference Board, continues at the high figure of nearly 10,000,000. This figure is completely understated—and at the same time the number is growing.

Relief Slashes

Relief is being slashed. Hundreds of thousands have been arbitrarily removed from the relief rolls by Roosevelt's orders. At the same time, the number of new applicants is increasing.

Wages are being cut and a general drive against wage conditions is under way.

The cost of living continues to rise, with the result that the living conditions of the masses is becoming ever more desperate. In the City of New York, Dr. Adela Smith, assistant director of health education, declares that 18 per cent of the school children are undernourished. Dr. Smith speaks of "near starvation." How many children below school age are in a similar, or worse, condition, no one knows.

Union-Smashing Drive

The drive to smash the unions is on. Company unions are growing, despite the Wagner Labor Disputes Bill—or shall we rather say because of the Wagner Bill, which recognizes company unions. The use of thugs, police, militia, is increasing. Workers' meetings are being banned and broken up. Fascist organizations are increasing, adding to their list the recent group of outspoken Fascists who signed Hearst's "new Declaration of Independence." Among these signers was none other than the president of the American Federation of Labor, William Green.

Lynching stretches out its bloody hands as before. Attacks on the foreign-born continue and intensify.

The whole toiling population is being assaulted and their rights are being tampered with. The workers are fighting with increasing determination. Local strikes, city-wide general strikes, regional strikes, industrial general strikes, are on the order of the day. Struggles of the unemployed are growing. Strikes against Roosevelt's hunger forced labor wages on relief jobs are pending. Strikes against the high cost of living are being organized. Demonstrations against fascism, against terror against the Negroes, against war, are taking place in every part of the country. These demonstrations embrace not only workers, but also professionals, white collar workers, church people, whites, Negroes, people of all political and religious affiliations—Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Republicans, Democrats, Socialists and Communists. In these demonstrations, the young people play a leading part. Practically no struggle takes place without the active participation of Communists.

The Communist Party throws its membership into all the struggles of the working people. A Communist Party that does not play a leading part in the struggle is not fulfilling its role of leading the workers, farmers, lower middle classes in the fight for their daily needs and for overthrowing the system of oppression. Communists participate in all strikes, unemployed struggles and demonstrations, struggles of the farmers, demonstrations against fascism, for Negro rights, against war, in the shops, in the unions, at the relief bureaus, on relief jobs, in the streets—wherever the workers have to put up a fight, there the Communists are to be found.

All struggles today take on the form and content of political struggle. All the issues have been made the consideration of law making, law executing bodies. The N.R.A., A.A.A., Wagner Labor Disputes Act, so-called social security bills, injunctions, etc.—are all questions for municipal, state, or national legislation. That is one of the functions of the government.

There is deep dissatisfaction and unrest among the American work-

ers and farmers. This is being shown not only in the economic struggles taking place in the shops and streets, but also in law-making. The failure of the N.R.A. to meet a single promise made by Roosevelt—except to the bankers and manufacturers, who have profited immensely by it—has led to mass defections from Roosevelt support. The Republican Party is in a bad way. Breakaways from the two major parties have taken place and are taking place daily. The EPIC, Commonwealth movements in the West, the strengthening of the Progressive Party in Wisconsin, the Farmer-Labor Party in Minnesota, the revolt of the Knieckerbocker Democratic Club in New York against the leadership of their own party, are indications of this discontent.

Desire for Political Action Seen

The attempted organization of third parties is merely an effort to head off the mass revolt against the two major capitalist parties, the growing revolt against the capitalist system, for which they stand. The movement for a Labor Party in Detroit, Connecticut and other cities and states, shows that the workers, farmers, unemployed, veterans, professionals, are beginning more than ever to recognize the need of independent political action led by the workers, particularly the trade unions. These political struggles take place in the shops, unions and wherever the workers are to be found. It is the conscious differentiation that is separating the workers from their bosses, the trade unionists from the leaders who still try to tie them to the tail of the bosses' parties on the basis of the worn-out, treacherous policy of "rewarding our friends and punishing our enemies."

This policy has brought the United States into the situation in which it is today—at the hands of both the Republican and the Democratic parties. A situation in which insecurity, hunger, fascism faces the vast majority of the toiling population, while profits grow and the war danger rises.

Parliamentarism is part of the struggle of the masses. In the parliamentary struggle—elections, participation in municipal, state and federal government—the lives and conditions of the workers are, in part, being determined. Of course, this is not the sole determinative force. The struggles and demonstrations of the masses—mass action—frequently decide the course of action in law making, in the execution of laws. A powerful picket line smashes injunctions. A big demonstration at relief bureaus and boards of aldermen brings more relief. Demonstrations bring working class prisoners out of the jails, to which they have been sent by capitalist judges. Mass action one day in this country, too, will put an end to the capitalist system. Part of this mass action is participation in the election struggle—in the mobilization of the masses of the discontented to support the candidates of the working class.

Fall Elections Significant

This year, therefore, the elections are very important. The masses want different representation in the government. They have heard their former "spokesmen" make glowing promises before the elections, only to betray them after election, as, for instance, Roosevelt, LaGuardia, MacLevy. But how can they have real representation in government unless we Communists bring them our message—as we do in strikes and unemployed struggles? Unless we rally them to support real representatives of the working class? Unless we enthrone them to mobilize the workers to vote for working class candidates and send them into the chambers of government?

What would it have meant to have a single Communist in the Board of Aldermen in New York City? An Assemblyman in the State Assembly in Albany? A Congressman in Washington? If that had happened in a single large city, state or in Congress, then for the first time the VOICE OF THE PEOPLE would be heard amid the corruption, make-believe, cowardice and fascism that is expressed there. This cannot and will not be accomplished unless every member of the Communist Party, first of all, recognizes these facts.

Once this recognition is secured, then it is our duty to rally all sympathizers, the workers in the shops, unions, unemployed organizations, veterans' posts, professional organizations, etc., the young workers (first voters), men and

women, Negro and white. In the campaign we bring forward the issues for which we fight on the picket line, in demonstrations. We fight for the needs and rights of the working class against all its enemies.

Ballot and Final Aims

Does this mean that the aims of the Communist Party will be attained through the elections? We Communists state quite frankly that capitalism will not be abolished by votes. The capitalist class will not surrender power by the workers voting it out of existence. On the contrary, with vicious force and violence the capitalists will hang on and attempt to crush the struggles of the workers.

The Election Campaign is part of the struggle to overthrow capitalism. It serves, as few other instruments do, to mobilize the masses for this struggle. Communist spokesmen in government use their office to continue and deepen the mobilization. The election campaign and the election of Communists teach the masses lessons in struggle, teach them how to fight.

For Earnest Election Work

Never before had the Communist Party such an opportunity to obtain mass support for its program. The masses no longer can so easily be fooled by the "red scare." The masses know that when a strike is to be won, they need Communist methods, if possible, Communist leadership. These masses will vote for Communist candidates. We must prove to them that we are just as intent on electing Communist spokesmen for the masses as we are to win a strike, to gain more relief. But we have not yet convinced the masses of our earnestness about the elections. Hence they follow our leadership in strikes and struggles, but they vote Democratic, Republican, Socialist.

These workers, farmers, veterans, Negroes, professionals, belong to us. They accept our program of struggle. Let us go out and mobilize them in a smashing campaign to elect Communists, to fight also in the legislative and other halls for the Workers' Bill, H. R. 2827; for union wages on relief jobs, for the unrestricted right to organize, strike and picket, for Negro rights, against attacks on the foreign-born, for a Labor Party, against fascism and war.

Away with all sectarianism in the election campaign! Make the election campaign the summary of all our struggles! Rally the masses for support of our fighting platform and candidates. Let us become the leaders of the masses also in the elections.

Forward through struggle against fascism and war to a Soviet America!

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