

Zam Outlines Many Important Tasks of the Young Workers Communist League

(Editorial Note:—This is the fifth installment of the report of Herbert Zam, executive secretary of the Young Workers' Communist League, at the Party Convention.

Comrades, I said before that we have not completely made the turn, we have not completely reoriented the League and its activities toward the new course. And to the degree that we were hindered in completing this turn, to that degree did we fail to overcome the shortcomings of the League which are important, which are basic, and which must be overcome, which will be overcome we are confident, if we follow this new road.

Basic Shortcomings.

The League is still a very small organization, in spite of the big increase in membership. Comrades, this is big only in percentage; it isn't so big in actual figures. Our League is still a small organization, still much isolated from the masses of the young workers, and does not respond sufficiently to their needs, and struggles. As a result, we have a bad social composition. I will give you the figures later. But our League has one of the worst social compositions of any League in the CYI. There may be historic reasons for that, but the fact remains that this poor social composition hinders the development of the League and reorientation forward and participation in mass struggles.

Poor Composition.

Largely because of poor social composition, we have not succeeded in mobilizing the entire League in the struggles in which we have entered, as, for example, the miners' struggle. There still exist pacifism and an under-estimation of the war danger throughout the ranks of the League. We have practically no shop nuclei, comrades, in a country having the largest factories in the world, factories with thousands of young workers. It is a sad fact to come here and admit that we have practically no shop nuclei, and unless we succeed in overcoming this, we shall actually not sink our roots into the masses of young workers in industry and participate in their struggles.

Negro Work.

In the field of Negro work, we have been very negligent. First, we have not understood the question. We have underestimated the importance of the work. We did not devote the necessary attention to it, and we did not assign the necessary forces to this work.

And finally, comrades, one of our shortcomings has been that we have had no contact with and have given no assistance to the revolutionary youth movements in the colonies, in Latin America, in the Philippines, where those youth movements play an important role, a more important role than in the advanced capitalist countries like the United States. And one of our big tasks will be to promote and to strengthen the youth movements in the American colonies and semi-colonies.

Comrades, I shall not go into detail to enumerate every achievement and every shortcoming and failure. I want to give you more or less of a

general picture of the situation and I believe that the examples chosen have given you such a picture. What can we say about the general situation? That the general line has been for improvement in the position of the League and in its activities. We have corrected serious shortcomings in our work. We have made general progress as an organization. But most of the basic shortcomings with which our League was born, which it has carried through its life, still hinder it at the present time and prevent its development. And we must set our face sternly and uncompromisingly in the direction of the liquidation of these shortcomings in order that the League may really develop as a mass Communist Youth League, as a real leader of the young workers in all their struggles.

Some Figures on League.

Comrades, just a few facts dealing with the actual status of the League, which I believe the Party comrades should have, because it is seldom that Party comrades know precisely what is what in the League. At the beginning of December a registration of the membership showed a little over 3,400 members. This was an increase, since the last Convention in November, 1927, when we had 1,900 members, of 80 per cent. In March 1926, we had a little more than a thousand members. Consequently we find that in the period from March 1926 to December 1928 about two and a half years, the League has increased its membership by about 25 per cent.

Comrades, not all of our members are in good standing. But the good standing membership for the entire year of 1928 averages about 2000, as against 700 in 1927, and 500 in 1926. Therefore, comrades, we say that there has been an actual increase in the membership of the League, not only in the membership on the books, but in the number attending meetings, in the number paying dues, and in the number actually drawn into the work of our organization.

Social Composition.

Insofar as the social composition is concerned, the figures today, in December 1928, are as follows: industrial workers, working in factories, mines, mills and railways, 44 per cent; clerical workers 10 per cent; students 37 per cent; farmers 8 per cent, and domestic service 5 per cent.

You see, therefore, a large percentage of students in the League. While some of these students belong in a special category, as for example the students in district 9, superior district, which the delegation from that district understands; nevertheless this indicates a very serious situation for the League, with a very large kernel of non-proletarian elements, or at least, elements not actually engaged in industry. However, the percentage of students in the League has dropped. In February 1928 it was 37 per cent. Therefore we have had an absolute drop of 5 per cent. The percentage of workers in the League in February 1928 was 43 per cent. Therefore, there has been a slight increase in the percentage of industrial workers.

The general process has been what? Up to the beginning of 1928 we had a de-proletarianization process in the League. We did not see it. We did not take any measures to prevent it. At the February plenum 1928 we first observed the seriousness of this phenomena and took measures against it. Therefore we say now, the de-proletarianization process has stopped. The percentage of students in the League has dropped, but the increase in the percentage of industrial workers has not been appreciable, that has been about at a standstill.

Proletarianization.

Consequently the task of the proletarianization of our League still remains as the basic problem insofar as the social composition of the League is concerned. However, comrades, one factor is noticeable, and that is, that the absolute number of workers has grown from 1048 in February 1928 to 1475 in December. And, still more important, the proportion of our membership, of those workers working in large factories and in basic industries, has increased.

The only figures we have are for June and December. In June, 41 per cent of our industrial membership worked in large factories (over 500 workers). In December, 43 per cent. In June, 7 per cent worked in medium factories, that is factories with between two to five hundred workers, while in December, 18 per cent of our membership worked in medium sized factories. In June, 51 per cent worked in small factories, in factories with less than 200 workers, in December this had fallen to 39 per cent.

Therefore, there has been an improvement, insofar as the proportion of our members in basic industries has increased due largely to the influx of members into the League in connection with the mining campaign and with the textile work.

Comrades, we must note, however, and it is regrettable that a good many of the workers we got into the League during these campaigns are no longer in the League at the present time, a large factor being the factional situation in the League which resulted in driving out some of the best proletarian elements.

(To Be Continued.)

Body of Militarist Envoy, Herrick, at Sea

BREST, France, April 7.—Almost 12 years since the entry of the United States into the world war, the body of Myron T. Herrick, imperialist and United States ambassador to France, was taken back to America today.

The body of the ambassador, who died last Sunday, was placed aboard the crack French destroyer Tourville.

A drizzling rain was falling. Three destroyers accompanied the Tourville to sea.

The other classes decay and finally disappear in the face of modern industry; the proletariat is its special and essential product.—Karl Marx (Communist Manifesto).