

# Workers (Communist) Party

## Communism Becoming an Issue in Cleveland

By ISRAEL AMTER.

FOR a few years, the Communist movement in Cleveland has been at a standstill as far as the masses are concerned. The arrest of a Cleveland comrade at the Bridgeman convention in 1935 was the beginning of a wave of sympathy with the Workers (Communist) Party, but the activities of the party did not meet with response from the workers, especially the organized workers.

Today the situation is different. Since the reorganization of the party, by which the nuclei in the shops have become active among the masses of workers in the factories, Communist influence has been felt. In the union, too, the Communist influence in the form of constructive propositions for the upbuilding of the labor movement have been listened to with attention.

The activities of the workers Communist Party in bringing on the strike of the workers at the Fisher Body Works is a case in point. The Communists issued shop bulletins which were eagerly read and discussed by the workers. A strike resulted, and the question of organization became an issue. The Communists naturally are for an industrial form of organization, as against the craft form which breaks up the workers in the auto industry into 15 to 20 craft unions. The meetings of the trimmers who are on strike were punctuated with demands for an industrial union. Although the workers have not yet fully grasped the meaning of an industrial union and see the craft idea as faulty as that in the present

strike, only the trimmers are out and are protecting their craft interests to the extent of expressing indifference as to whether the other departments come out on strike or not, the workers are learning thru experience that only the industrial form of organization is of value.

The Cleveland Plain Dealer contains a note on the strike by John W. Love, the economic expert of the paper. He states that the struggle between the industrial form of organization as against the craft form is showing itself in the rivalry between the Workers Communist Party and the Cleveland Federation of Labor. More than that: at meetings of the strikers, even the organizers of the American Federation of Labor cannot stigmatize the industrial form of organization, for they realize that without an industrial organization, the auto workers will be unable to cope with the situation.

The bulletins of the Workers (Communist) Party are to be found in the largest machine and automobile factories of the city. The Communists are no longer slandered as "union wreckers" and disrupters of the American labor movement, but are regarded as the only group that has any constructive idea for building it up.

It is quite natural that the bureaucrats of the American labor movement notice some of the phenomena of the day and notice also that the American workers are making demands today, endeavor to deal with the Communists in a wave-of-the-hand sort of way. But this does not avail. At the last meeting of the Cleveland Federation of Labor, a resolution was introduced

calling upon the American Federation of Labor to demand that all material used in erecting the buildings at the Sesqui-centennial Exposition in Philadelphia be union-made and all labor used be union labor.

As soon as the delegate failed reading the resolution, President McLaughlin of the Cleveland Federation of Labor, asked where the resolution came from. (He had been informed by some of his lieutenants that there was something "wrong" about the resolution.) He refused to argue the resolution on its merits—for if he had dared he would have had to declare himself 100 per cent in favor of it. On the contrary, he evaded the question, and raised a "Red" scare, and branded it as "Communist, Red and Workers Party propaganda." A simple way to get rid of the resolution, and to defeat it, which took place. But the issue is not settled.

On the contrary, if President McLaughlin continues this method of dealing with the proposals made by the Communists, nothing will be more talked of than the resolutions introduced by the Communists. And they will be talked of just the same. The Communists are introducing propositions that directly affect the labor movement of this city and country. They are the only constructive measures being proposed. The progressives throughout the local labor movement are unconsciously responding to the propositions of the Communists. This must be crystallized into organizational form—a progressive movement in the Cleveland labor movement is the need of the day.