

Views On Labor News

We Have Communists With A Great Working Class Base

SCANNING the faces of some 1,100 delegates at the New York state convention of the Communist Political Association, I was impressed by the very large number—hundreds—of trade union leaders there. Never in the many Communist conventions that I attended have I seen so many. In former days our union leaders usually had to be urged to run as delegates for Communist conventions. This time they needed no urging to dive into the keen competition to be elected.

Merely taking note of those I know personally and the approximate number of workers in their unions to whom they are responsible on such important matters as living standards and working conditions, I stopped figuring when I was well past the 40,000-mark. And this does not take into account the upstate areas.

Workers have confidence in these men and women to the extent of electing them to offices of highest union responsibility. These delegates were anchored to a powerful progressive base—workers who have achieved such political maturity that red-baiting does not determine their sentiments. Also those delegates are directly rooted among shop workers and the thousand and one problems that crop out of the life of a shop every day. Their very routine forces them to stay on the class struggle path. Otherwise they wouldn't last on their jobs.

The discussion at the state convention, quite



by George Morris

naturally, centered on the task of cleaning out revisionism from our ranks. As in the general discussion, speakers demanded steps to guarantee that such deviation from Marxism as we experienced in recent times should never again be possible. The speeches and resolutions adopted laid great stress on strengthening the working class core of the Communist movement, concentration in basic industry, shop work, etc., and advancing workers and trade unionists to leadership within the Communist organization.

WE HAVE pretty generally agreed that if our membership is more solidly rooted in the working class, especially in the basic industries, and if we make sure that genuine democratic centralism in our ranks prevails and this healthier base is reflected in our work and policies, then we have a strong repellant to un-Marxian influences.

That raises a great responsibility for Communist leaders of that great progressive trade union core I started to describe. Since the cradle days of our Communist Party there was a constant struggle to involve Communist union leaders—local and national—in the work of Communist leading bodies. We have always had a sort of a “division of labor”—those who carry on the affairs of the Communist Party and decide its policies, and those who are busy in unions. Unionists put on leading Communist committees seldom attended meetings, or did so somewhat as “guests.”

Back in the early days we often explained this aloofness as a “syndicalist” influence. But that hardly holds today since the unions themselves, especially the unions in question, are active politically. The fact is nevertheless that hangovers of the aloofness remain. Unionists often feel that a Communist policy runs against the grain, as they certainly had in recent months. But either an unquestioning confidence in Communist leaders, traditional disinterest in theory or mutual strangeness, deprives the Party of their real views. They just go along and make use of Communist policy or simply “let it ride.” It is not a secret that in practice, Communist unionists bypassed much of our Browder-inspired policy.

I BELIEVE that among the important reasons for our CPA's wandering from the path of the class struggle and basic Marxist principles is this unhealthy aloofness of our unionists from Communist leadership. It is time that Communists in unions become interested in all work and policy, not only on matters that concern their specific work. The result would be a great improvement in work and policy for both the Party and Communists in unions.

Watching that great number of delegates who, as I well know, proved themselves so able to lead thousands of workers, I asked myself if only some of these comrades undertook to REALLY take a part in leading Communist bodies and REALLY became integrated in the Party's life, what a real refreshing of Communist leadership we could have! We must have it.