

Lessons of 3 N.Y. Union Polls

By Rose Wortis

(This is the first of a series of four articles)

During the past few weeks a number of local union elections took place in New York. The result of these elections must be carefully studied by the labor movement especially the left progressive forces, since they reflect the problems facing the union, problems which must be solved without any delay if the trade unions are to make their maximum contribution to the war and guarantee their own growth and progress.

The locals involved are in widely different industries, different types of workers and with varying degree of political development, etc.—such as Local 302 of the cafeteria workers, for many years under militant progressive leadership of Sam Kramberg, the musicians Local 802 under the leadership of Jack Rosenberg and William Feinberg, more closely associated with the social-democratic and middle-of-the-road forces in the labor movement; Local 807 of the teamsters under the leadership of Thomas Hickey, mildly progressive and a New Deal Democrat.

Though widely different in many respects, certain problems faced in the elections were common to all three.

In all three locals the progressive leadership came into office as a result of sharp struggle with reactionary forces in the leadership, supported by the overwhelming majority of the membership. In all instances the new administration had achieved victory through a policy of united front of various groupings on the bases of a progressive program.

SHIFT TO OPPOSITION

In all instances the leadership, after being in office for a number of years, faced sharp contests in the recent elections not only from the traditional opposition but many of its former supporters.

Though the outcome of the elections was somewhat different in the musicians, teamsters and cafeteria locals, the votes were so close (Hickey was elected by a majority of 60, Rosenberg by 500 as against 2,000 as in the last elections, and Kramberg was defeated by 60 votes), that they made little difference as far as our analysis is concerned.

The problems which challenge our attention are the following. How came that in this period when the general trend in the labor movement in the nation, is toward unity, membership on these unions was so widely split that honest workers, former supporters of the progressive administration shifted to the opposition.

What were the issues on the basis of which the opposition gathered its strength, what was the character of the opposition? The answers to these questions in my opinion can be summarized as follows.

The progressive leadership did not prove itself equal to the task of consolidating the unity amongst the workers and isolating the disruptive elements. It failed sufficiently to make distinction between disrupters, traditional oppositionists and some instances defeatists and honest workers dissatisfied with the handling of union problems. The disrupters on the other hand capitalized on the legitimate grievances of the workers, magnified them and placed themselves in a position as to appear as the champions of the interests of the workers. Following the lead of the defeatists and business as usual elements generally, they developed a widespread slander that Communists and progressives are ready to sacrifice the interests of the workers.

SUPPORT OF WAR

The leadership of these unions was not quick enough in adjusting itself to the new situation confronting the labor movement under conditions of war when problems are more complicated and did not find new methods of fighting energetically in defense of the economic interests of the workers not in conflict but as an essential part of its wholehearted support of the war.

Further the progressive leaders did not sufficiently realize that while reactionary leaders in undemocratic unions may be able to maintain themselves in office through the power of a political machine, progressive leaders in democratic unions must struggle daily for leadership of the masses by proving themselves the most alert, most capable, defenders of

the interests of the workers.

Any sense of complacency, taking the workers for granted can only lead to defeat. There is no question in my mind that this too was a factor responsible for some of the upsets.

Workers when explained will understand that unions cannot always attain their objectives with one jump, but they must be convinced that nothing possible was left undone to satisfy their demands.

It is to be hoped that experience of the recent elections will shock the leaders out of their complacency, make them sit up and seriously do examine the type of leadership they have been giving the workers in their respective fields and thus turn the partial defeats into victories.

Federal Workers Gain Overtime

(Special to the Daily Worker)

WASHINGTON, Dec. 29.— issued an executive order which gives time and a half over-time for

More than a hundred thousand are employed in the New York

The Presidential order stipulates that no overtime compensation shall be paid on basic pay over \$2,900 per year nor to an amount which lifts aggregate earnings to more than \$5,000 per year.

To compute overtime compensation, the pay for one hour shall be considered one-eighth of the employee's pay for one day and the

The Independent The Sinister

By George Morris

The sinister hand of John L. Lewis can be seen plainly in the current attempts to combine company and independent unions into a "third labor movement."

Spokesmen of the various company unions gravitating to the so-called Confederation of (Independent) Unions, who in the past used Lewis as a bogey to keep their members from legitimate unions, are today changing their tune. Now Lewis is an umbrella for them. They speak of Lewis with reverence and compare their own "independence" to that of the unaffiliated Mine Workers.

There is evidence that this courtship parallels a change of heart among the very industrialists and defeatist forces who pull the strings of the marionette officers of company unions.

For many months now there has been a surprising silence about Lewis in the press or business magazines. He is no longer the devil whose name was identified with the CIO and progress. His opposition to the Roosevelt administration; his defeatism and coldness to a war production program in coal, and his disruptive drive under the banner of his catch-all division, Dist. 50, places him in a "constructive" light among business circles.

Wilfred Sykes, president of Inland Steel Corp., which is defying the War Labor Board, gave an indication of some industrialist opinion in his speech before the recent convention of the National Association of Manufacturers. He delivered an attack upon the administration for what he termed "attempting to balance the CIO and AFL." Businessmen of his type, have always pinned their hopes on a continued struggle between the CIO and AFL. Mr. Sykes then warned that independent unions will rise and that