

LABOR ACTION

Independent Socialist Weekly

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CP Caught Redhanded Stealing Funds of UE

By A. WINTERS

NEWARK, Apr. 1—More evidence that the Communist Party and its followers put the interests of the Stalinist organization above those of the workers was revealed last week by the official publication of District 4 of the CIO's International Union of Electrical Workers (IUE), the District Dispatch.

The Dispatch carried photostatic copies of checks made out to the Daily Worker, CP newspaper, to the Council of Soviet-American Friendship, the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee, etc., from the funds of Local 441 of the United

Electrical Workers (UE) in Elizabethport, N. J., while the workers were engaged in a life-and-death struggle with the company during their eight-month-long strike in 1946.

One of the checks made out to the Daily Worker during this period of combat was for \$250. When confronted with the damning evidence by the IUE-CIO, James McLesh, Stalinist leader of the UE district, tried to squirm off the hot seat by saying that all the checks uncovered were payments for ads taken during the strike.

Such is the phony excuse that McLesh gave as a trade-unionist—that it was a matter of trade-union "business"; but what excuse can the Daily Worker give for taking such sums of money from starving strikers? The CP sheet will have to think up an explanation for its failure to DONATE the ad space used by the Phelps-Dodge strikers in appealing for aid.

Instead the Stalinists and their front organizations systematically and cold-bloodedly raided the "sinking fund," as they called it, in order to finance their own stooge outfits.

CP TRIED HOUSEBREAKING

All this information was uncovered when the Phelps-Dodge workers, about 100 of them, voted

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Harry Bridges Convicted

As we go to press, the news comes of the conviction of Harry Bridges, Stalinist leader in the West Coast CIO.

LABOR ACTION has already expressed its opinion of this trial as a case of political persecution. As firm and vigorous opponents of Stalinism and of everything that Bridges stands for, we look upon this case not as a blow against the CP but as another bow by the government against civil liberties for all.

Full story and discussion next week.

Liberal Dilemma: ADA Weighs Its Independent Role

By HAL DRAPER

The third national convention of Americans for Democratic Action ended last Sunday, April 2, with the great dilemma of U.S. liberalism as unresolved—and unresolvable—as before.

There is no doubt that ADA is by far the outstanding organized representative of American liberals. Formed at the beginning of 1947 under the leadership of the most prominent "left-of-center" political personalities and labor leaders, many of them exiles from the New Deal, it started as an attempt to provide a center for those liberals who would have nothing to do with the Stalinist taint. This it did by demonstra-

tively excluding the CPers and CP fellow travelers from its ranks. But this settled only one problem besetting liberalism.

It was made definitively independent of all Kremlin influence. But that did not yet give it a reason for existence. And the great dilemma before it is nothing less than its very reason for existence. That was the problem, almost in so many words, which was the main focus of its debates once again.

The kernel of this question is: independence from the Fair Deal. The concrete dilemma is: if the ADA is to be independent from the Fair Deal Democrats, by virtue of what program and ideas is it to achieve such independence?

At this third convention, by an insurgent "revolt" from the floor, against the recommendation of

the Political Policy Committee, an explicit tieup with the Fair Deal was voted down and deleted from the statement. The move has important significance, but mainly because it deepens the dilemma, not because it resolves it.

MORE CRISIS AHEAD

The passage stricken out stated that "for the achievement of liberal purposes, cooperation with the Fair Deal elements of the Democratic Party affords the best opportunity on the national level at this time." In its place was inserted: "ADA reaffirms its political and organizational independence. We will continue to work for the nomination and election of candidates for public office of whatever party, when their records are consistent with the principles of ADA."

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1,200 HEAR SHACHTMAN VS. BROWDER

NEW YORK, March 31—In what was widely regarded as the most unusual and even sensational political meeting of recent times, Max Shachtman, national chairman of the Independent Socialist League, and Earl Browder, ex-general secretary of the Communist Party, met in debate yesterday before a packed audience in Webster Hall on the question "Is Russia a Socialist Community?"

Shachtman, an outstanding spokesman for the ideas of genuine socialism and once the editor of Leon Trotsky's works, is a "Trotskyist enemy" in Browder's vocabulary. This was the first time in this country that a prominent Stalinist has appeared on the same platform with a leading spokesman of Marxist socialism to match political views. As is well known, this was possible because, since 1946, Browder has been discarded by the Communist Party, which he ran for Moscow for 14 years, and is now in a kind

About 1,200 listeners crowded into the hall to hear the debate, filling all chairs and overflowing to standing room for a couple of

hundred. The meeting had been initiated by and was held under the auspices of the Eugene V. Debs Society of Brooklyn College, a campus club. Victor Kaplan of this club opened the affair and introduced Professor C. Wright Mills of the Columbia University's Sociology Department, author of the recent book "The New Men of Power," who acted as moderator.

The debate went off smoothly before a uniformly attentive and engrossed audience as the two speakers alternated before the mike. By previous agreement, Browder spoke first for 45 minutes, followed by Shachtman for the same amount of time; after these presentations, there followed a rebuttal by Browder for 20 minutes, one by Shachtman for 25 minutes, and a final 5-minute sur-rebuttal by the ex-boss of the CP.

Indicative of the wide circles interested in the event, the press table was well filled. News stories appeared the next day in the N. Y. Times and other papers. The New York Post's labor columnist, Mur-

ray Kempton, devoted his Friday space entirely to the debate, noting in regard to Browder's argumentation that "what Shachtman did to this was murder." The Daily Worker also had its official representative present at the press table in the person of Joe Clark, listening with poised pencil for "deviations" by his former master.

On the same day, by previous arrangement, the N. Y. Daily Compass—which runs a daily "Issues of the Day" page presenting opposing points of view on various questions—devoted its page to a preview of the debate in the form of short statements on the subject by both Browder and Shachtman. This is unusual for the Compass, which is run by a fellow-traveler of the Wallaceite variety, T. O. Thackrey; in any case, in spite of devoting this amount of space, or perhaps because of it, the Compass subsequently did not even print any report on the debate itself.

The debate was recorded on tape and if possible the full text of all speeches will be published in some permanent form.

Independent Socialist League challenges Communist Party to put up official spokesman to debate on Russia . . . p. 8



Shachtman-Browder Debate

(Continued from page 7)

"No," replied the guide, "but what about the Negroes in the South?"

There was another effective way of answering Browder's method of glossing over Russia's crimes by attacking the Polish landlords, as if this was relevant to the debate, in addition to reminding Browder that Shachtman's criticism of Russia came not as a defense of the NAM, of the Polish colonels—or of Nazism. "My comrades," said Shachtman, "were murdered for supposedly supporting a pact with Hitler [referring to the liquidation of the old Bolsheviks in the Moscow purges]. There were no documents, nothing, to prove it. But there was one document. It appeared in the *Daily Worker*. It was not my name that was signed to it. It was not Trotsky's, not Rakovsky's... Whose signature was on it?"

This challenge on the notorious Stalin-Hitler pact of 1939 was not taken up by Browder.

Quoting Lenin's statement that "socialism cannot remain its victory... unless it establishes complete democracy," Shachtman affirmed: "I stand on that more firmly than ever before." He closed his last speech with a fervent and eloquent avowal of the basic role of democracy for socialism.

And what of Browder's own line, his political reason for being (or non-being)?

He still preaches the gospel of the wartime alliance of Russia and the Western Allies, that peace is the immediately necessary goal and that it can be achieved by an agreement between capitalism and Russian "social-

ism." America is organized, he maintains, to halt the crusade of "socialism" (that is, Stalinist power) in other countries. Russia, on the other hand, "has no urge toward war, no profit in it." Russia, Browder insists, supports only "wars of liberation and not wars of reactionary invasion." Still the apologist for Russia, even in his heresy!

However, Browder still calls for peace, an agreement between the two world systems. He apparently thinks it can be arranged by some kind of UN agreement, not (he stressed) by preaching "socialism" to America now. "There is no peace until its terms in state relations have been defined and accepted," was the way he put it.

He suggested that the United States could get the markets it requires by peaceful cooperation with "socialism" (Russia). He was not even hopeless about the prospect, even though he placed the blame for the cold war solely on the U.S. Making an analogy with the Sherman anti-trust laws, which did not bust the trusts, he felt that perhaps the warlike attitude of the American bourgeoisie (yes, he retains the phrase) might signify a "move into peace backward, its usual method." And, with an attempt at a profound phrase, he intoned: "Backing into the future is possible only by a powerful ruling class."

For his heretical views on peace, Browder has been separated from the Communist Party. In all other respects, he is the apologist for Russia. In his final, agitated sur-rebuttal, he cried: "If democracy means the power of the people to determine their own destiny, there

must be a thousand times more democracy in Russia than anywhere on earth. The people are constantly determining the system under which they live."

And, for the party that ousted him, ostracized him, branded him traitor, would not permit his mild difference within its ranks, Browder had only a gentle slap on the wrist. One had difficulty catching it, for he did not even call the party by name.

"Only political idiots," he said, "believe socialism can be smuggled into America. Socialism will come only when a Marxist party has won the confidence of the working class and can convince the working class that socialism is necessary also in America." One must remember again, in Browder's vocabulary, "socialism" equals Stalinism, "Marxist party" equals "Communist Party." He condemned the CP (in anonymous terms) for trying to combine both the struggle for peace and the struggle for "socialism" into one movement.

This identification of Stalinism with socialism, as Shachtman charged repeatedly, is the greatest blow that Stalinists, and some who are not Stalinists, have delivered against the movement for socialism. "The Stalinist movement has done more than any other single force in the world to give weapons against socialism into the hands of capitalist reaction."

If the debate accomplished no more than distinguishing the world of difference that lies between the Stalinist ideology and the ideals of genuine socialism, it served its purpose brilliantly.

ISL Challenges CP to Debate

The debate between Max Shachtman and Earl Browder constituted such a stunning ideological defeat of Stalinism that it brought consternation into the ranks of those Stalinist sympathizers (especially students from Brooklyn College) who attended.

The story on page 6 about the Labor Youth League meeting on "Trotskyism" tells the story. The Stalinists have been trying to repair the damage by claiming that Browder can't adequately defend their views, and even by implying that there was some sort of "collision" between the debaters.

The Independent Socialist League last week pulled the props from under this shaky "explanation" of Browder's defeat when it issued a public challenge to the Communist Party to debate the same or a similar question (see box).

Spokesmen of the ISL state that they are well aware of the fact that the Stalinists have an official policy against debating "Trotskyists." However, they point out, it is just possible that sufficient pressure may be generated in the ranks and periphery of the Stalinist movement to force the CP leadership to debate the ISL.

"Should they refuse to debate us," said Albert Gates, secretary of the ISL, "it will prove that they share our conviction that they can't successfully maintain their position in fair and open debate."

Letter to Communist Party

April 3, 1950

General Secretary
Communist Party of the U. S. A.
35 East 12th Street
New York, New York

To the General Secretary:

On March 30 of this year, Max Shachtman, national chairman of the Independent Socialist League, debated Earl Browder on the question "Is Russia a Socialist Community?" at Webster Hall under the auspices of the Eugene V. Debs Society of Brooklyn College. Considerable public interest was aroused by this debate held in the presence of over a thousand people.

It has been brought to our attention that at a meeting last week held under the auspices of the Labor Youth League of Brooklyn College, on the subject of "Trotskyism," Marvin Reiss, editor of *Political Affairs*, your theoretical magazine, said that Mr. Browder did not adequately defend the view that Russia is a socialist community, and that this task can only be accomplished with success by a member of the Communist Party.

In view of the widespread interest in the Shachtman-Browder debate, we think a debate on the same topic, or some similar one, between Max Shachtman and a representative spokesman of your organization would be a political event of first-class interest to the American public. We therefore propose to you such a debate, the time, place, auspices and exact subject to be worked out jointly.

We await your early reply.

Political Committee
Independent Socialist League
By ALBERT GATES

A Footnote on Judge Medina: Put Himself Out Defending Nazi

NEW YORK, April 2—The Herald Tribune today reports a "disclosure... made the other day by Judge Harold R. Medina" which sheds a curious light on the man who, from his bench, presided over the trial of the eleven Communist Party leaders in Foley Square. In that trial, as judge he continually harassed the defense lawyers (who made his antagonistic attitude easy by their stupidly provocative tactics) and finally soaked them with contempt-of-court charges at the end in a vindictive move.

The interesting "disclosure" concerns Medina's role in 1942 in acting as defense attorney for Anthony Cramer, an active pre-war member of the German-American [Nazi] Bund who was on trial for treason on the charge of being in league with two of the eight Nazi saboteurs who landed by submarine. Cramer then took a pauper's oath and the judge in the case assigned Medina to act as his counsel without fee. This, of course, is the usual procedure.

The case lasted over three years and, revealed Medina, "it cost me

\$100,000 to act as court-assigned attorney." This figure represents, he said, what he would have earned with his time spent. Over the three-year period, Medina devoted one-third of his time to the Cramer case. In addition, he personally laid out almost \$1,000 for expenses in appealing the case, preparing briefs, using his own office help and paying for trips to Washington. "His arduous services," writes the Herald Tribune, "were rewarded in April 1945 when the high court set the treason conviction aside. Later that year Cramer pleaded guilty to the much lesser charge of trading with the enemy and was sentenced to six years in jail."

Medina is now quoted: "I certainly had my hands full in that case. People cursed me out for defending Cramer. I didn't think of it as a sacrifice. It was an opportunity to serve my country, even if I didn't get a nickel."

"The Cramer case," remarks the newspaper article, "was an outstanding instance where a pauper got the best legal defense for nothing." It tells the story in connec-



ON THE PLATFORM: Max Shachtman speaking, Earl Browder sitting at table, Prof. C. Wright Mills, moderator on the right.

CP Steals --

(Continued from page 1)

overwhelmingly to go with the CIO and to reject the Stalinist UE. The Stalinists had previously dominated the local from its inception.

Accompanying the discovery was a series of episodes which should put all opponents of the CP on guard.

When the IUE-CIO took over the local it had no way of knowing what the CPers had been doing with the local's funds. But it was already known that something strange was brewing. Mysterious phone calls had been received by the recording secretary of the local, Joe Mrak, who had previously held the same position in Local 441, UE. The phone calls demanded the local's records. Then one night, while Mrak was away from home, his house was broken into, and the assailants knocked his wife, who was pregnant, unconscious. They searched the house thoroughly but were disappointed: the UE records were not there, having been removed for safe-keeping.

The UE violently denied any connection with a recent action by Medina in assigning three lawyers to defend former Army Sergeant John David Provoo, who is under indictment for treason.

The contrast which many people will make is between Medina's personally-financed "arduous services" as counsel for the Nazi Bundist and his behavior on the bench as judge in the Smith Act case against the Stalinist leaders, as well as his subsequent behavior in hurling the book at the latter's defense attorneys.

complicity in the attack. But even before the recent revelation, its denials convinced few that this act of gangsterism was not up its street. It was plain for all to see that only the Stalinists wanted the records so desperately—and now one knows why. It is equally plain that the Stalinists do not shrink from any acts of violence against working-class opposition if they feel that such violence will aid them.

It was after the invasion of Mrak's home and the assault on Mrs. Mrak that the UE records were carefully combed and the incriminating checks to Stalinist groups revealed.

The disclosure is of particular interest to the workers at the Singer plant in Elizabeth, who were on strike for six months last summer under the leadership of the UE Stalinist heads. In this plant the IUE-CIO is now battling the Stalinists in a drawn-out, struggle for control. UE Local 401, which is involved, has so far refused to issue an itemized financial report of all funds collected during the Singer strike. It does not take much imagination to picture the Stalinists licking their lips at the sight of the more than \$500,000 which poured into the Singer strike.

After this experience anybody who had any illusions that the CP and its trade-union forces represent any "legitimate" part of the labor movement should have shed them. The CP trade-union groups can be seen for what they are: first and last, agents of the Kremlin and therefore opposed to the best interests of labor.

**MAY DAY
Celebration
of
"TEN YEARS"
OF
INDEPENDENT
SOCIALISM"**

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**Adelphi Hall
74 Fifth Avenue
New York City
(near 13th St.)**

**Sunday, 8 p.m.
APRIL 30**

**Auspices
Independent
Socialist League
Socialist Youth League**