

THE UNITED FRONT OF EMPLOYED AND UNEMPLOYED

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UNEMPLOYMENT continues steadily to increase ; every day information comes from all corners of the earth concerning the shutting down of more and more factories, lowered production, increased unemployment and the introduction of a shorter working week. How many unemployed are there in the capitalist world ? The counterfeiter of the International Labour Office of the League of Nations remained silent on this point for some time ; then a few months ago they at last instructed their learned henchmen to institute an enquiry. These gentlemen came to the conclusion that the whole world contains 15 million unemployed. The Geneva prostitutes now report that there are already 20 million unemployed, and in order to provide a shred of authenticity to their figures, they give a list of countries and refer to the official statistics.

But the Geneva hirelings in vain imagine that their figures are at all convincing ; it is well known that unemployment statistics are a "sore point" in all capitalist States. Who is interested in concealing the number of unemployed ? The State, the owners, and the reformists. Why are they interested ? Because otherwise they would have to admit the correctness of the estimates made by the Communist International and the R.I.L.U. Therefore the League of Nations, all its scientific commissions and its trade union department in the form of the Amsterdam International, all give definitely falsified figures in the hope of deceiving somebody at least. Yet the most elementary, most approximate calculation of the number of unemployed in capitalist countries proves that every one of the Geneva professors and politicians is merely uttering platitudes and lying enough for two. If we take the capitalist countries alone, then the most modest calculations show a figure for unemployment of over 30 million. And we have no figures concerning the semi-colonial and colonial countries. If we add the tens of millions of unemployed and starving workers in such countries as China, India, Indo-China, Philippines, Indonesia, Africa and so on, then it becomes quite obvious how really false and shameful are the figures of the Geneva Labour Office.

Every worker is faced with the menace of unemployment. There is now no workers' family not affected in one way or another by unemployment ; therefore the question of the fight against unemployment has become the most urgent, the most concrete question for the whole working-class. Even the most backward workers cannot fail to think of to-morrow—they see with their own eyes how factories and workshops are being shut down, how

millions of workers are being thrown on the streets, with what insolence the capitalists are ever trying to lower the already miserably low standards of living of the workers. For this reason the question of unemployment is the problem of to-day for every worker still employed. Your turn to-day, mine to-morrow. . . .

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This huge, rapidly increasing unemployment has exceedingly alarmed the entire capitalist world. State politicians, learned deputies, engineers and trade union bureaucrats are all racking their brains to solve this question ; the number of inventions in this sphere grows daily. All these inventions have one aim : to distract the attention of the workers from social insurance by the State and the employers ; hence the idea of the "stagger system" of working in turns (Hoover), the plan to hand over to the owners all sums of money which the unemployed receive in benefits, on condition that they employ these unemployed in their own factories (German Finance Minister Dietrich), and the temporary shortening of the working day with a corresponding decrease in wages (Amsterdam International), etc.

Among these plans for the miraculous healing of unemployment, the "Christian" International of Trade Unions also intended to give its widow's mite ; it therefore issued a special number of its publication devoted to the crisis, which cites the opinions of archbishops and other members of the Church, "competent" to deal with these questions. From these writings it appears that unemployment is increasing because all have forgotten God. And since their prescriptions are beginning to take on a godly character, we can hand them over to the theology specialists, and engage ourselves with more real things.

The prescriptions of Hoover, the Amsterdam International and others actually differ nowise from those of the Catholic bishops ; each in his own way throws the weight of the crisis and unemployment upon the shoulders of the working-class ; each in his own way tries to muddle the minds of the workers, so that they forget their own direct enemies. The united forces of these worthy lambs of Pius XI—Hoover, William Green, Leon Jouhaux, Friedrich Adler and Dietrich and the richest capitalist magnates—are proof of the fact that we are faced with a broadly organised campaign against the unemployed and against the main slogan of millions of workers—unemployment insurance to be paid by the State and the employers. Each one of these allies is mainly

engaged in trying to fool the unemployed, to drive a wedge between the employed and unemployed and to prevent the carrying out of the revolutionary slogans of the Communist International and R.I.L.U.

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The world labour movement is now sharply faced with the question of forms and methods of struggle against unemployment. Almost everybody knows that unemployment will vanish only with the overthrow of the capitalist regime, so that this is not the central question for the International Day of struggle against unemployment. The unemployed cannot wait until the working class conquer and build up the Socialist State. The worker and his family wants food now, and our slogans must suit the elementary requirements of the unemployed. However, our slogans must concern not only the elementary requirements of the unemployed, they must also get home to every worker. We must therefore bring before every worker the question of how *immediately* to obtain results, how *immediately* to save millions of people from death by starvation. This means that the whole campaign around unemployment must have as its backbone the struggle for State insurance by the State and owners to the full amount of wages.

The campaign should arouse millions of workers to seize the bourgeoisie by the throat and force it to immediately satisfy their demands. Can we achieve this? Certainly we can. Social insurance for the unemployed can be obtained within the framework of capitalism, and we must therefore condemn, as a very definite political mistake, the attempt to stipulate the introduction of unemployment insurance by the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. To put the question in this way is to immediately cut down the ranks of our fighters; for the overwhelming majority of unemployed will come to understand the link between unemployment and the capitalist system itself only in the course of the struggle. Our task is to bring before every proletarian the question of *immediate* assistance to the unemployed, as a practicable problem of to-day; and from this point of view to launch out with our work. Despite the infuriated resistance of the bourgeois State, it is possible in given circumstances to obtain direct results.

It is certainly possible to achieve this, but two conditions must be fulfilled: (1) a mass organisation of the unemployed; (2) a solid, united, fighting front of the unemployed and employed.

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What is the position as regards the organisation of the unemployed? We must admit quite frankly that we are moving forward in this respect at a snail's pace. Can we really consider it enough that in the United States we have a few thousand workers in unemployment organisations? Can we be satis-

fied with a state of affairs where there are only 15,000 in the unemployed organisation in England? We have not the exact figures for other countries, but there is not one country where the unemployed organisation embraces hundreds of thousands; and this is our weakest point.

Where millions are thrown on the streets, we ought to know how to unite these millions, for only the Communist International and the R.I.L.U. want to fight for the interests of the unemployed. The unemployed have many "benefactors": a special variety of lady bountiful has now evolved, who from morning to night bewails the fate of the "poor unemployed." But what is the use to the unemployed of these ladies bountiful from the League of Nations and the Amsterdam International, if their pity is for their own political purpose—to switch off the activity of the unemployed to the spheres of sighs and hopes for the future; to create a diversion whereby the unemployed, instead of demanding bread and work, will demand from their class brothers that they hand over their jobs in the workshop.

Indeed, the slogan for the temporary reduction of the working day aims at laying the burden of the crisis upon the workers; the worker must work half or two-thirds of a week with a corresponding decrease in wages—the remaining time is given to an unemployed worker. Can we call this a fight for the interests of the unemployed? This is the foulest kind of deceit. This is what the slogans of the left wing bourgeoisie represent.

We are the only advocates of definite demands for the defence of the daily needs of the proletariat, who propose at the same time forms and methods of struggle. It would seem that this fact should create all the prerequisites for the organisation of the unemployed masses around the sections of the Communist International and the R.I.L.U., and yet things go ahead very slowly. Why?

Because in the unemployed organisations, agitation takes precedence over organisation. It is not enough to launch forth slogans; we must go to the unemployed masses and explain these slogans; we must learn not only how to organise demonstrations, but to consolidate the results of each demonstration; we must learn not only to elect unemployment committees, but to keep an account of the number of persons who participate in the elections to these committees. The unemployed must be organised on the basis of permanent activity; they must not be appealed to spasmodically; but work among the unemployed must become one of our most important tasks, and we must prove to every unemployed worker that we not only put forward the most radical demands, but also that we fight radically, and that our way is the only way to obtain the demands we are fighting for. Then the masses will be with us.

We must increase tenfold the work among the unemployed, the more so since otherwise a section of the unemployed will fall under the influence of Fascism. The Fascists also have no active slogans to put forward. Fascism wants to utilise a section of the unemployed against the growing revolutionary wing of the labour movement. Therefore it is extremely dangerous to remain passive in the work of organising the unemployed.

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Of even greater danger is the possibility of a breach between the unemployed and employed workers. All the inventiveness of our enemies is directed towards setting the employed workers against the unemployed. This is the whole point of the slogan of a temporary reduction of the working day with a corresponding lowering of wages. The aim of this slogan is not mentioned, but its hypocritical meaning is quite clear. The Amsterdam International, instructed by its masters, turns to the unemployed and says: "You are starving because the man who is still working in the factory is an egoist; he doesn't care about you; he doesn't want to let you have part of his wages; he doesn't want to evince proletarian solidarity towards you; you must fight to make the workers engaged in industry give up their place at the bench to you." This is the idea of their vile slogans. This particular slogan makes possible the enormous danger of a split in the working-class, a split between the workers and the unemployed. It means the setting of one section of the workers against the other; the driving of starving, desperate workers to blacklegging and the betrayal of their class interests. This amounts to driving one set of workers against the other.

Whose interests does this serve? Who wins? What do the workers and unemployed get from such tactics? They both lose, both the workers still engaged at the bench and the unemployed. The employed become part-time workers; the unemployed become the same and the State stops paying them unemployment relief. The owners evade the payment of additional taxation, and the bourgeoisie, thanks to the splitting of the workers into two enemy camps, can keep both in an iron grip.

In these circumstances, daily work for the consolidation of the united front of employed and unemployed becomes of especial importance. It is extremely important to arrange for all kinds of joint activities: the active participation of the unemployed in assistance to strikers, participation of employed in unemployed demonstrations; joint presenting of demands, etc. The united front should find its organisational expression in demonstrations and the presenting of demands. But this is not all: this united front must be strengthened organisationally. This means that workers must be represented on all

unemployed committees; the problem of unemployment should be discussed in all factories; every worker should understand that he is a candidate for hunger and poverty, and that only joint activities can create a change in this direction.

Is this line carried out sufficiently energetically? It is carried out in both articles and speeches, but to a much lesser degree in actual daily practice. The unemployed organisations in many countries are cut off from the Comintern and R.I.L.U. sections; no daily joint work goes on; there is no unity of action; there is a certain degree of overlapping. In some countries an almost complete theory has been created to the effect that the unemployed should be formed into a close organisation, and that the more independent of the R.I.L.U. section this movement is made, the better. All these theories are extremely harmful, the more so now, since they take the line along which the bourgeoisie and the Amsterdam International are urging the workers.

Those who do not help to forge a united front between the employed and unemployed, who break away the unemployed organisations from the workers' organisations, who try to isolate the unemployed movement from the general proletarian class struggle, who separate the demands of the unemployed from general class and political demands of the workers,—whether they want to or not will bring tremendous harm to the labour movement of their countries.

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The International Day of struggle against unemployment must be a widespread review of the forces of the revolutionary labour movement. This is not only the day of the unemployed; it is the day of the united front of unemployed and employed, a most important day for the labour movement as a whole. Therefore, in preparing for International Day, our chief task must be to bring forward as of most importance the problem of the united front of employed and unemployed. Thus the whole question of the united front from below is placed on the order of the day, for this is the best time for adopting this tactic. The tactic of a united front from below cannot be adopted in general terms: it can only be used in connection with concrete mass activities, and what can be more concrete than the demands of the unemployed; what is of a more mass character than the hunger actions of millions; and what time can be better for this tactic of the united front from below than during discussions, drawing up of demands, the presenting of these demands to the ruling classes, and in unity of action in all kinds of demonstrations and other political activities.

It is quite obvious that the tactic of the united front is essential for uniting the unemployed and employed, and also for bringing together the unemployed

themselves ; for only thus can we tear away from capitalism, fascism and social-fascism those workers who still follow in their trail.

We cannot know how many workers and unemployed will demonstrate on February 25th with their proletarian demands; but our task is to mobilise the workers according to the branch of industry on which they work, and in the localities, and to bring out millions into the movement. If last year there were 17 to 18 million unemployed, the number is now well over 30 million. Hunger and poverty have grown tenfold, and the whole movement this year should be raised to a considerably higher standard than on March 6th last year. This can be obtained only by uniting the unemployed on the basis of the united front from below and consolidating the united front of unemployed and employed.

On February 25th the question of unemployment comes before the international proletariat as a whole, that is to say, we do not only raise the question of provision for the unemployed but also the question of the destruction of the system which produces hunger, suffering and unemployment.

Recently, the Second International and the Amsterdam International have jointly attempted to give an answer to the question of a way out, but this answer which has been whispered to them by the League of Nations consists in making the workers take upon themselves all the burdens of the crisis and of unemployment. We give a different answer. The

present economic crisis is the sharpest expression of the collapse of capitalist stabilisation. It accentuates all the internal contradictions, it mobilises millions of workers in the struggle against hunger, suffering and the capitalist system.

We raise on February 25th the question of the true way out from the present crisis. The answer to this question was given by the October Revolution. While unemployment advances like an avalanche in the capitalist world, in the Soviet Union it has completely vanished. The liquidation of unemployment in the U.S.S.R. is the most important political international fact of last year. This fact reflects in the clearest manner the contrast between the two irreconcilable systems, the system of capitalism and the system of Socialism.

Let the social-fascists attempt to repair capitalism as it goes to destruction. Let the quacks of the Second and Amsterdam Internationals seek out "left" manœuvres for the salvation of their masters. The revolutionary labour movement, united through the Communist International and the R.I.L.U., which knows in which direction events are bound to develop, must accelerate the historical process, must liberate and organise those mighty forces which slumber in the depth of the toiling masses. The way out from hunger, suffering and unemployment lies only in the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat and the establishment of the Soviet system. There does not and cannot exist any other solution.