

Militant, March 24, 1934

Organizing the Home Relief Workers

About three months ago a group of workers in the Emergency Home Relief Bureau, under the pressure of intolerable working conditions and miserable wages, called an open meeting of Home Relief workers for the purpose of laying the basis for organization.

As a result of this meeting an Initiative Committee was elected and the E. H. R. B. Employees Association was formed. For two years prior to the formation of the Association, the C. P. members working in the Home Relief Bureau, although constituted as a UNIT, never called any open meetings of Home Relief Workers. The extent of their activities consisted in issuing wild, ultra-Left leaflets distributed by the Unemployed Councils, calling for a general strike, etc. No address was given where workers could communicate with them. Everything was done in a very secretive and underhand manner. Later they began signing the leaflets with the name of PROVISIONAL COMMITTEE, giving the address of the Office Workers Union. Needless to say these tactics had a very disastrous effect on the workers who became very wary and suspicious when later approached by the Association.

Seeing the tremendous response

919 New Subs!

Sixty-five more new subs came in last week bringing the total up to 919 subs within 81 days

The subs received last week:

Boston Br.	16
Oakland Br.	12
F. Bernsmoler	8
Chicago Friends of the Militant Club	8
Q. Parker	5
W. Sokut	4
New York Local	4
Philade., Br.	4
Devonport	4

TOTAL 85

The complete record up to date follows:

of the workers to the first call for organization, they immediately called a meeting of the PROVISIONAL COMMITTEE and there laid their plans for "capturing" the organization. They also drew up a "program" to present to the organization, which however never saw the light of day, since it was so far short of the program presented by the Initiative Committee.

Before the INITIATIVE COMMITTEE was disbanded, it had won the recognition of the Administration as well as a 25 to 50% increase in wages for all Home Relief workers. It also won the re-instatement of 54 of 76 dismissed porter-watchmen as well as a few minor concessions. These concessions, which were granted by the administration in order to forestall further organization, however had the opposite effect. Within a month 3500 workers were enrolled in the organization.

Just as soon however the PROVISIONAL COMMITTEE, which managed to get themselves elected to the most important posts in the organization (by 6 votes) in the city committee, by virtue of their coming in as a bloc, took over the reins of the Association they started a vicious factional campaign against everyone who dared disagree and oppose their policies. This campaign took the form of vile character assassination and name calling which disgusted and drove away the non-partisan elements. At every meeting of the City Committee another representative from one of the C. P.'s numerous paper organizations appeared and demanded to be given the floor either to ask for contributions for a march to Washington or for a "United Front" (C. P. style) against one thing or another.

Disruptive Tactics

Discussions on these questions, although important in themselves, were nevertheless irrelevant to the immediate problems facing the organization. And when workers saw that the meetings never even got around to discussing the first point on the agenda, due to the intrusion of delegates from other organizations who insisted, with the help of the Stalinist officers, on dissipating the time at their disposal, they refused to come to meetings and be-

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came inactive in the organization. The insanity of these tactics can best be appreciated, when it is realized that the majority of the workers are from the white-collar strata with a definitely petty-bourgeois background and no previous organizational experience. The non-partisan elements seeing that vital problems affecting the organizations were relegated to the waste basket for discussions on the "United Front" with the Relief Workers League and the Unemployed Councils—before they were even sufficiently organized to participate effectively in such actions—walked out of meetings in disgust. Several precincts withdrew from the organization and others, although organized, have refused to join.

The depths to which these sterling "revolutionists" will not go to win their objectives is difficult to imagine. This can best be illustrated by the fact that although they themselves take every precaution to hide the fact that they are "Communists", even going to the extent of denying it—without being pressed for a statement of belief—print attacks on other Communists in the *Daily Worker*, giving their political and organizational affiliations. And then they dare call other workers "stool-pigeons"! The Administration, no doubt, is very grateful to them for this information.

Needless to say they have been too busy, with their factional activity to do any real work in the organization. Since the INITIATIVE COMMITTEE has been disbanded and they have had control of the organization nothing has been accomplished. Many of the problems on which the INITIATIVE COMMITTEE had begun negotiations with the Administration, such as pay for sick leave, which was promised—and some procedure for collective bargaining with the administration, have not been pressed. There also remain the other points on our program which have to be fought for, such as:

5-day week and 6-hour day for all Home Relief Employees.

30-day sick leave through the working year—with full pay.

A month's vacation to all employees with one year's service—and those with less than a year on per diem basis, with pay in advance.

Two weeks pay on dismissal. The organization to have to fight to review all cases of dismissal.

These demands can only be won by a leadership whose interest is the welfare of the Home Relief Workers and not the sectarian interests of "13th Street". Toward this end a progressive group is being formed to fight for a class struggle policy, and against the disruptive activities of the Stalinist leadership in the organization.

—HOME RELIEF WORKERS.