
Clique or Class?

What's Happening in the ILD?

by Benjamin Gitlow

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Unsigned article, attributed to editor Ben Gitlow.

The course that the new leadership has now initiated in the various mass organizations around the Party is full of danger not only to the Party itself but to the entire working class movement. It is a course aimed at the destruction of the character of these organizations as the organs of the whole working class and their perversion into instruments of a clique. It means the smashing of organizations and institutions that have taken years of the hardest work and sacrifice to build.

The mad wrecking course of the Party bureaucrats is best illustrated in the case of the **International Labor Defense**. This organization is suppose to be an organization of the whole working class, without political or other distinctions. As the Communist International at the 6th World Congress [July 17-Sept. 1, 1928] made clear, it is

an independent organization standing outside of all parties which on the one hand defends all victims of the revolutionary struggle and on the other admits to membership without any distinctions of party.

It was on this basis that the ILD was organized; it was on this basis that it grew and developed; it is on this basis only that it can maintain its existence and function in the future.

The new Party leadership has adopted a course in precisely the opposite direction. It has decided in effect that the ILD is to be narrowed down not merely to the Communists but to that section of the Communists which supports the criminal policies of the present Party leaders. The

recent ILD conferences show this. Every means so well known to the Party wreckers, every trick and manipulation with which they are so familiar, was utilized in order to exclude the “renegades” from the district and national conferences. Inevitably this meant that not only would the best and most valuable Communists be excluded but that the militant non-Party workers would also be excluded. And this was the fact.

The way in which the various committees were selected for the national conference — with not a single non-Party worker — shows how far the narrowing of the ILD has proceeded. In spite of all the “precautions” and repressive measures of the Party bureaucrats, many supporters of the CP-Majority Group were elected to the conferences on their record of militant and loyal service. At the conferences the repressions continued. The “loyalist” clique ruled these gatherings with an iron hand, refusing the floor to non-Party workers and to the supporters of the CP-Majority Group. Such shameful behavior had its inevitable effect: the conferences were demoralized and there were actually cases of non-Party delegates leaving the conferences in disgust! Kate Gitlow — with a record of decades of devoted and heroic service to the working class movement — was not permitted to speak!

The rapid narrowing of the class basis of the ILD is manifested also in the criminal refusal to defend victims of class justice just because they are supporters of the CP-Majority Group! The

cases of Sam Rubin and Becky Lapeda in Philadelphia have brought this shameful fact out in all clearness.

The conversion of the ILD into a narrow clique has already been "theorized." At the New York conference Nessin and [Louis] Engdahl announced officially that the national convention would amend the constitution of the ILD by eliminating the declaration that the ILD is a non-partisan organization. Thus will the finishing touches be put...

The Party membership and all militant workers must not tolerate the political corruption of the ILD! We must unite our forces for a determined struggle to maintain the broad class basis of the ILD which alone can assure the fulfillment of its historical role.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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