

N.S.W. State Conference of Unemployed Workers' Movement

Membership Growing, Organisation Strengthened

70 Delegates Discuss Unemployed Problems—200 Eviction Fights Won Many Demands Achieved

EXTRACT FROM THE REPORT OF THE STATE EXECUTIVE TO ANNUAL CONFERENCE

(Reporter: J. Sylvester, Nat. Sec.)

Since the conference of last July the movement has made good progress, both organisation and numerically. Twelve months ago there were some 50 branches in existence in N.S.W., many of which were weak in membership and functioning in a more or less haphazard manner. At that time District Committees were non-existent, and consequently, no serious attempt at co-ordinating the activities of the branches could be made.

The general policy of the movement was either unknown or not understood by many comrades, and intense confusion reigned in some quarters as to what were the best tactics to adopt to win the ever increasing mass of unemployed to the fighting programme of the U.W.M.

The conference of July, 1930, was successful in clarifying the position to a certain extent, and the program of immediate demands based upon the discussion at that conference, formed a good working basis upon which to commence operations.

The history of the past 12 months is composed of a series of victories and reverses. In the early stages an intensive fight was waged throughout the branches against the reactionary elements who desired to confine the activities to seeking charity, and who advocated an abstention from the fighting policy of the U.W.M. Where those struggles were carefully handled, easy victories were gained, but in other cases, where the attack was made too abruptly, and the comrades concerned lacked the necessary knowledge and experience, they developed into bitter sectarian issues and led to the splitting of the unemployed into two camps. Friction of this kind was deliberately fostered by the enemies of the U.W.M., by Garden, the "Labor Daily" and the Labor Party, who desired to control the movement, and to divert the struggle from the class issue to the sectarian issue. All kinds of slanders were used against our movement and attempts were made to drive away the politically weak elements from the ranks by raising areas of Communist control. This was done to try and discredit some of our more active comrades who are members of the C.P.

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NEED FOR ORGANISATION IN DISTRICTS

The result of setting up District Committees was seen in the sudden activity that took place in the movement. Street meetings became an established fact in every locality and a great strain was thrown upon the State H.Q. resources in attempting to supply capable speakers for the many meetings. The State Executive, which had undergone varied changes owing to many of its original members being gaoled, was not sufficiently well organized to cope with the situation. This necessitated immediate action, and other members were co-opted on to the State Ex. in place of those who were in goal and those who had resigned. The addition of new members and the setting up of monthly full executive meetings, wherever each metropolitan district was represented, solved the difficulty, and to-day the central body is working more or less smoothly.

DEMONSTRATIONS, ETC.

The rapid radicalisation of the unemployed, and their appreciation of the U.W.M. form of organization, has been well proven by the response made by them in answer to the call for demonstrations. On the opening of the State Parliament the branches in the metropolitan area demonstrated in full force outside Parliament House, and in spite of police terrorism showed themselves alike on that occasion to support the militant leadership of the movement. On March 31, International Unemployed Day, we staged our first really big procession and demonstration, and the enthusiasm shown that day assured well for the future of the movement. The day formed a D.W.C. played a prominent part in the demonstration and although inexperienced, showed themselves willing and ready to carry out their duties. In the large demonstration called by the Communist Party on May 1st the U.W.M. also played a prominent part, and con-

tributed to the success of the demonstration. The demonstration was held at the Trades Hall, where thousands of unemployed and union workers carried resolutions condemning the Government and the Labor Party, and the "Labor Daily". It is significant that not one word of the demonstration appeared in the "Labor Daily" or any other capitalist paper, in the "Herald" or any other whole capitalist press entered into a conspiracy of silence to shelter one of its number.

OUR FIGHT FOR THE IMMEDIATE DEMANDS

The immediate demands as laid down at the early annual conference have formed the basis for our general activities. One of the last acts of the last administration before the State election was to create the first demand of the movement, i.e., the open order for goods on the local storekeepers. This was claimed as a partial victory for the U.W.M., for although the food stores are still closed, the open order is a vast improvement on the previous method of distributing ration cards.

The fight for increased rations has been the most important of the movement. It might have been expected that any real attempt has been made to hold regular meetings at the bureaux and no definite move has been made here (with the exception of the South Coast) to hold mass demonstrations at the bureaux. The struggle on the South Coast, where rations were declared "black" until the Government made a definite move, resulted in a temporary victory in that area. The U.W.M. committees were reconstituted at the local bureaux and the police were removed from the bureaux. However, owing to our inability to extend the declaration of "black" to all other districts the South Coast victory has been more or less sabotaged.

THE INCREASE IN THE DOLE

The 25 per cent. increase of rations cannot be claimed as a definite victory. Certainly the continued forcing and agitation of the movement forced the social fascist Labor Govt. to make a gesture, but when analyzed, this supposed victory was a definite setback. It, but actually a decrease! By establishing a permissible income for the unemployed, in which is included Child Endowment, Pensions, and the like, the Government has not only increased the permissible income in places where their permissible income is exceeded, with the consequence that they are only entitled to draw rations once a month, or alternatively, have their benefits reduced to a lower scale. Also, on the basis of reports received from a number of so-called ration inspectors appointed by the Government to investigate the unemployed, thousands of workers have been robbed of their rations. This especially applies to the foreign born workers. In all probability, therefore, the Govt. is actually saving money whilst deluding the unemployed with a supposed 25 per cent. increase.

THE ANTI-EVICTION CAMPAIGN

The anti-eviction campaign has up to date proved the best means of rallying the unemployed to the movement. At a time when hundreds of workers were being evicted without a word of protest from other organizations, the formation of active anti-eviction committees, and the results achieved by them, worked to the workers the fullest clarity of the U.W.M. to cope with the situation. In the course of eight months over 200 cases of eviction were successfully resisted, and as great was the result of our activity that thousands of workers rallied to the movement. At one period we fought 10 cases simultaneously and brought each one to a successful conclusion. The hundreds, becoming alarmed at our increasing power, held a secret consultation to the Govt., and at that interview demanded the use of the State forces in combating the U.W.M. This permission was readily granted, and from then on, commencing with the Douglas Street case in Redfern, the police were used—not only to assist in the evictions but also to assist in the degrading work of throwing families and furniture into the streets.

The lesson of Bankstown and Newtown is that all our forces were not thrown into the field to activate the workers, but many were engaged merely in preparing defensive measures to carry out their duties. In the campaign they showed a tendency to desert from mass work to carry out individual work. Because the houses

at Bankstown, Newtown, and Guildford were being evicted, it was necessary to assume that every house must be evicted in the same way, the idea of evicting every house into a furnace of barbed wire and sandbags must be abandoned, and every available strategy must be used to mobilize the masses of the workers in the neighborhood in support of the tenant.

The sum total of the Labor Party's anti-eviction act from a legal point of view is to leave the unemployed tenant in precisely the same position as he was before—at the mercy of a magistrate, with the added inducement of police supervision of his domestic affairs. It will be readily realized by all comrades that the anti-eviction fight is by no means over, but only sharpened in its intensity, and the Govt. intends being in a position to deal with the evictions problem.

OUR WORK WITH THE MINORITY MOVEMENT

Our contact with the workers in industry has not made the progress that it would have done had the revolutionaries laid down clearly the distinction between the M.M. and the U.W.M., as expressed in the policy of the I.L.L.U. Owing to our omission in this vital matter, various theories have been put forward, and all branches are urged to get in touch at once with this organization in order that a mass protest campaign can be brought into being.

Coupled with this is the idea that we should run our own candidates for parliamentary and municipal offices. This theory entirely loses sight of the fact that there is in existence another and much larger section of the workers still in industry, and also a political party whose avowed object is the overthrow of Capitalism, i.e., the Communist Party.

£50,000 for Prisons

We demand that the government supply building material and employ unemployed building trade workers on the construction of a definite number of cells for the unemployed who are existing in camps at Port Kembla, Fairy Meadow, La Perouse, etc. The U.W.M. on the South Coast, protest against the action of the government in spending the sum of £50,000 on the construction and renovation of police cells, and that the unemployed be put in rotten tents and old huts in the bitter winter weather.

and consequently, any numerical increase of the workers' movement cannot be successful unless, at the same time, we have the active support and sympathy of the other sections.

The Minority Movement—the Australian section of the I.L.L.U.—the militant rank and file movement of the workers in industry. The U.W.M., being the unemployed section of the workers, is naturally an integral part of the revolutionary movement as a whole. For the U.W.M. to attempt to separate itself from the rest of the workers' movement would merely be putting into effect the policy of the ruling class, that is, the separation and isolation of one section of the workers from another.

The rapid progress of the M.M. during the past few months has afforded the U.W.M. the opportunity of putting into practice their conference decisions. When, recently, the Water & Electric Workers' Union, M.M. policy and formed committees in aid of preparation for a strike, the M.M. immediately declared its solidarity with the potential strikers. Committees of action were formed in every district where W. & E. jobs were in progress, and the movement took a prominent part in the formation and propaganda work of the committees. When the Seamen's M.M. called for a strike the same procedure was adopted, and despite the fact that neither of these strikes materialized, the support of the U.W.M. to play a militant part in the struggle was greatly appreciated by the workers concerned, and created a lasting bond of unity between the employed and unemployed.

WHAT THE DELEGATES SAID DISCUSSION ON EXECUTIVE REPORT

Com. Barrow, in the chair, opened the conference with a brief review of the present situation of the working class, and showed the identification of the economic crisis, increase of unemployment, the intensification of the struggle of the unemployed in relation to evictions, etc., the drive of Capitalism towards war, the danger of an attack on the Soviet Union.

Com. Barrow ended an excellent address by emphasizing the need for unity between the employed and unemployed, placing unity in the forefront of the tasks confronting the U.W.M. The U.W.M. must move itself in such a manner that the unemployed would regard the U.W.M. as a source of strength and not as a menace in time of economic straits.

The conference then carried a motion of sympathy with the relatives of Com. Johnson, Newtown, and also Newtown U.W.M., in the loss of a working class fighter.

Fraternizing greetings were received from the Victorian U.W.M. Conference and a telegram despatched. Delegate J. Kavanagh said that his District (N.S.W.) was growing steadily in strength, and that the fact of three existing organizations existing in the area. This was due to getting down to the demands of the rank and file together with having an aggressive policy.

Delegate W. Orr, criticized the demerit of the U.W.M. in not having withdrawn the active elements from the U.W.M. and neglected to carry out mass mobilization tactics. The M.M. and U.W.M. must get to the front of the 25 per cent. dole increase, and pointed out that the U.W.M. must struggle against all tendencies towards isolation.

Delegate Munday (transville) expressed the frustration of the U.W.M. in not having a program of immediate demands. There are plenty of such issues upon which the unemployed could be organized for a fight. We must have a useful program, and we could not expect to exist. We must pay attention to the matter which are regarded as important by the rank and file.

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Delegate Valley (Newcastle) said the country areas must be organized, and the Harby and Riverina movements were striving to enlist the country unemployed. U.W.M. country organizers were needed or we would have a Fascist force sweeping down on the industrial areas, and the same fate as our Italian fellow-workers did at the hands of Mussolini.

Com. Sylvester National Secretary, in reply pointed out that the forces at headquarters must be strengthened. All the work must be done by comrades. We must get into the country and oppose the Fascists. We have had a couple of successes, we have had Jubbo and Mudgee for the U.W.M. recently. We must also finance for country organizers.

The U.W.M. is growing, and particularly from an organizational point of view are we becoming strengthened, whilst as yet there is still too much reliance on individuals. Members are not yet taking their own initiative and forgot about rent, cost of materials, speakers' fares, etc., and thus did not send in any finance to headquarters. If they sent in the 20 per cent. according to the rules, much more work could be accomplished.

Our membership fluctuates according to circumstances, but we are definitely organizing the better sections of the unemployed. The new element of the unemployed are the very pick of the unemployed.

Particularly is this the case in regard to women. A short time back there were practically no women in the U.W.M., but now they are everywhere active.

Some of our branches are growing rapidly, whilst some are losing membership. The latter is due in many instances, as in the case of the South Coast, in the active elements being in goal. Glee has lost members through sabotage by such enemy agents as Lyddell, the notorious Havlock Wilson man.

GENERAL

Our movement in the country areas is not progressing very rapidly. At present we only have seven country branches, which are well scattered throughout N.S.W. At present we have actually 70 branches functioning in N.S.W. with six others in a state of temporary inactivity. The numerical strength is hard to estimate, but an average of 200 members per branch would be a fair proportion.

most not repeat previous isolation incidents. He appealed for support and finance for the W.D.C. Delegate M. D. Ryan stated that our membership has increased, and also activity, but the leadership is too narrow, the tendency everywhere being to rely on a few leading elements, and not draw the membership into the work; thus new cadres must be developed, who would be needed to lead the offensive of the workers. The role of women was underestimated in the U.W.M. The active elements often look too far ahead, and were not sufficiently responsive to the opinions of the rank and file.

The T.U. officials and politicians, who are continually pushing their favorite ideas, are a danger to the unity of the unemployed as a whole, having not been sufficiently exposed. We need more action and less talk. Sections of the unemployed were developed, were asked in metropolitan areas. The U.W.M. must correct this. Delegate Crick (C.M.V.P.A.) U.W.M. must help to build the fraternal organizations. The organizational confusion as to the different functions of the various bodies must be cleared up.

Delegate Oliver (Roseley) said the priority areas must be tackled, and the latest social fascist move to disrupt the U.W.M. combated. Delegate Jolliffe (Ryde) emphasized the importance of women. Said U.W.M. in Ryde was boycotted as far as halls were concerned. Authorities were backing "Red" outfits.

Delegate Jackson (Campdown) said the U.W.M. cannot live on propaganda. It is no use sitting in chairs in the U.W.M. office. Active functions are needed, together with a program of immediate demands. There are plenty of such issues upon which the unemployed could be organized for a fight. We must have a useful program, and we could not expect to exist. We must pay attention to the matter which are regarded as important by the rank and file.

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ANTI-EVICTION U.W.M. VICTORY AT SOUTH MELBOURNE MASS PICKETING WINS

The attempt to evict the Branch of the Albert Park Branch, Comrade Johnson, was defeated on the 23rd, when the warrant was withdrawn. On Friday night, the house, 15 Withers Street, St. Albert Park, was mass picketed, and the office of the agent Richards, Young & Co., was well chalked with the information that he was the "Eviction King" and throws unemployed workers and children into the streets.

After the victory, the Press announced that the U.W.M. had conquered and that rent had been paid. This was a deliberate lie. The U.W.M. Branches at Prahran, Brunswick, Fitzroy, Richmond, and the W.L.R. proved its efficiency by providing for the pickets during the three days picketing.

Women and Youth Must be Drawn into the U.W.M.

POINTS FROM U.W.M. CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS AFFILIATION WITH I.L.L.U. AND M.M.

The conference carried many resolutions dealing with every-day needs, the situation of the unemployed, and the general activities. The resolution dealing with the Minority Movement, the Australian section of the Red International of Labor Unions, laid it down that the U.W.M. is an integral part of the M.M. and adopts the policy of the I.L.L.U. The conference adopted the resolution on the "Red Leader," accepting it as the joint official mouthpiece of the M.M. and U.W.M.

This close contact in struggle will defeat the social fascist policy of dividing the working class into two sections, employed and unemployed, and will bring about the closest unity between the workers in industry and those who are not. The resolution calls on the M.M. and U.W.M. to rally the masses on the basis of a common struggle for the demands of the employed and unemployed.

YOUTH SECTIONS TO BE SET UP The problem of the tens of thousands of unemployed youths occupied the attention of the conference. It was recognized that the U.W.M. has not yet attracted the Unemployed youths. In order to solve this problem, it was resolved to set up special youth sections of the U.W.M., which would study the special problems of the younger elements, and which would be capable of gauging their needs and attending to their demands. These youth sections will not constitute a separate organization, nor will they have a policy other than the general line of the U.W.M.

DEMANDS OF UNEMPLOYED WOMEN WORKERS The conference considered the question of the unemployed women at length, and whilst able to record some achievements in the organization of women, it was recognized that much greater attention must be paid to the struggle on behalf of the women, and as is the position of the male unemployed, unfortunately, were in that of the women. The conference therefore decided to carry on a struggle on the basis of the following demands for women:

(1) That unemployed women receive full basic wage rates for the period that they are out of work, but for same to be raised by a special tax on industry and administered by workers' committees, including men and women democratically elected.

(2) Milk and free lunches to all children of unemployed.

(3) Rationing of goods to cease and permanent work to be found for all at full basic wage.

(4) The establishment of suitable hostels for unemployed women, to be controlled by the U.W.M. committee and workers democratically elected.

(5) Free medical attention.

(6) Equal pay for the sexes.

(7) Abolition of night work for women.

(8) Two weeks' vacation every year on full pay.

(9) Fifteen minutes rest period twice daily.

(10) Social insurance during illness with full wages.

(11) Day nurseries to be instituted for working class children to be financed and administered by workers class organizations.

The splendid fight that women have put up recently in unemployed demonstrations, and in the anti-eviction campaign, is a positive sign that they are realizing their part in the general struggle, and despite police brutality and the degrading charges that they laid against the active women members, they refuse to be deterred from participating in the fight.



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August 1st S

Sydney Workers Pledge

Support to Soviet Union

AGAINST IMPERIALIST WAR.

At the first time in the history of the world the workers of Sydney have pledged their class opposition to the imperialist war, and their support to the Soviet Union.

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