

Roosevelt Closes His Third Year with New Deal at Low Ebb

Capitalists Desert 'Savior' As Crisis Clouds Lift

By JOHN WEST

In 1932 Roosevelt was swept stormily into office on a broad wave of middle-class bewilderment, working class and farmer resentment, and bourgeois fear. The curve of the business cycle was close to its very bottom, on the downswing of the mightiest depression the United States had yet experienced. Finance-capital itself was worried. The "orthodox" solutions, administered governmentally by Hoover, had got nowhere. The curve continued down. The middle classes, fluttering tremulously, saw no out. Faced with increasing impoverishment, proletarianization, and outright unemployment, they were losing all confidence in their former gods, the big industrialists and bankers. The farmers were crushed by mortgages, taxes, and low prices. The workers were decimated by unemployment without adequate relief, by sharply decreased wages and part-time jobs. The entire population was looking for a savior. Roosevelt pranced into the arena, with the banner of the New Era flung high. He offered himself to the people as their needed savior. His powerful demagoguery rolled out denunciations of the Tories and the money-changers. A new type of life was to be brought to America—freed from the domination of greed and private selfishness. The Forgotten Man was to become the basis of the new social order.

Savior of Capitalism

Now it is true that Roosevelt came into office in a sense as a savior: precisely as the savior of the capitalist order in the United States, as a stop-gap to tide over U. S. capitalism in a dark hour, as a channel to turn aside mass discontent from any development toward genuine social change. But, naturally, to accomplish these ends, Roosevelt could not appear in his actual economic role. The psychological and political requirements had also to be met. And to meet them, his program had to embody the half-formed dreams especially of the middle classes, and even, though to a lesser extent, of labor. This, then, was the material of the New Deal: in economic substance, a series of mostly temporary measures designed to help pull the business cycle out of the hole; in psychological and political form, a group of vague but inspiring generalities constructed to rally behind the Administration all who were bewildered, confused, and resentful.

There was, thus, little systematic opposition to the New Deal in its first period. Big business was scared, and needed the help of the Administration. The middle classes were full of hope. The farmers were encouraged by preparations for commodity inflation and direct governmental subsidy. Labor, not thinking in terms of class issues, was willing to follow its official leaders in welcoming the savior.

The New Deal did its work. It is of course impossible to estimate exactly how great a part the New Deal policies played, over and above the normal economic developments, in getting the business cycle out of the basement. But on any account the part was considerable—was, indeed, unprecedented for this country. Without Roosevelt's handling of the banks at the outset, it is probable that the "banking holiday" would have precipitated a most severe financial crisis. The inflationary measures helped the farmers and exporters directly and immediately, loosened up purchasing, and helped check bankruptcies. The NRA provisions aided the big corporations in putting some halt to the chaotic and destructive price-cutting, which was endangering the entire price and credit structure. The outlay of government funds through unemployment relief, the AAA, the various work relief agencies, loans of all kinds, etc., undoubtedly did a fair amount of the "pump priming" which the Administration promised. Section 7a, and a judicious combination of government arbitration boards with tear gas, managed to choke off two potentially major strike waves, and to "keep labor in its place."

The New "Prosperity"

Two minor upturns in the business cycle, during 1933 and 1934, have now been followed by a more considerable rise beginning in the early spring of this year. The dominant internal factor at present is the continuation of this new drift toward "prosperity." It is a very peculiar prosperity indeed. Hardly a dent has been made in unemployment, particularly if we take into account the youth who have come to working age during the past six years. Though factory payrolls are considerably increased, real wages of factory workers generally are still far below the 1928 level, and in many industries close to the crisis low. The professional workers and recent college graduates have an enormous percentage of unemployment and a great lowering of living conditions where employed. The farm laborers, sharecroppers, and poor farmers continue in desperate straits. But the

stock market has been steadily booming. Bonuses for executives have come back. A large number of independent as well as landlord and capitalist farmers have more money with the help of mortgage moratoriums, AAA benefits, and a combination of high prices and good crops during the current season (a combination resulting in part from inflation, in part from last year's drought). Chemicals, autos, munitions, steel, agricultural equipment, are forging ahead. Above all, corporation profits have mounted amazingly, each week bringing out new records since 1931 or 1930, and in some instances for all time.

Big Business Clamps Down

But what this means, from the point of view of finance-capital, is that the New Deal has served its purpose. With profits again rolling in, no need for any more nonsense about the Forgotten Man and a new social order. And no more extravagant governmental spending, with its necessary threat of either uncontrolled inflation or increased taxation. And no more playing around with "concessions" to the workers and the unemployed. And an end to this talk about Tories and money-changers, these slanderous attacks on American ideals, on the utilities and the banks and the Stock Exchange. Time to get down to real business again. It is all well and good to maneuver and talk and even accept certain devious methods and uncomfortable restrictions when things are on the edge of the abyss. But now that we have again picked up the scent of profits, away with this doll-playing and back to the high-road of true Americanism.

Thus has big business reasoned more and more openly during the past year and a half. And in the light of this reasoning, the campaign against the New Deal has taken form. The Chambers of Commerce throughout the land ring again with the old slogans. The editorials in the powerful newspapers denounce, deplore, and pile up the phrases about the Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini and anti-Christ in

the White House. Finance-capital comes again out of its lair; its limbs rejuvenated with the blood of profits, it roars once more with its lion voice. It smashes head on into the New Deal legislation through its courts; and where the courts have not acted, it goes its own way in open defiance. And what a sham the battle is at heart! Who is this redoubtable enemy of theirs? What is his reply? We read it day by day. Roosevelt promises a "breathing spell." He sends out Roper to glorify capitalism. He promises the bankers fullest cooperation. He pleads with big business, through the Administration press agents and the pro-Administration newspapers: "What



have you boys against me? Haven't I brought back your profits, kept labor in check, done all you asked of me?" He promises to stop the dole, to reduce the deficit next year to \$500,000,000 and the year after to bring the budget into balance. He is the injured servant, who has given his all to his master, only to be thrust out into the cold.

Only Privileged Few Benefit from New «Prosperity»

Meanwhile, in a half-hearted way, he continues his play for middle-class support by talking about the utilities and social security; and now by appealing to pacifist illusions in neutrality measures. But, alas, the middle classes no longer listen so readily. The middle classes always jump toward what looks at the moment like the winning side. With finance-capital again roaring, their depressed confidence again revives. It looks to them as if the big shots were right after all; and in any case only they seem to know their own minds. Ironically, every step forward toward "prosperity" loses for Roosevelt middle class support. If you can have the old-fashioned prosperity again, reasons the middle class, let's let it be run by its authentic representative, by the bankers and the old-fashioned Grand Old Party. Besides, what has Roosevelt done that he promised? No, we will return to the former gods, and sign up at the Chamber of Commerce.

A thankless task, indeed, this job of political dish-washer for finance-capital.

But times do not exactly return, and 1935 is not nor can be 1929. The Chambers of Commerce overlay their hand. The farmers remain in the majority behind Roosevelt. The industrialists in the unjoined industries stay with him. The middle class liberals have given up the Tories for good. And labor and the unemployed, for all their disillusionment with the shattered New Deal, are not now willing to go back quite as far as the rugged individualists, whose only tangible promises are a balanced budget, a smashing of independent unionism, and a cutting of relief. Thus Roosevelt can in all probability still be re-elected next year, unless major economic and social alterations meanwhile intervene.

But Roosevelt's victory taken in itself would not be the significant social symptom which it might seem—would not, for example, at all be a "vindication for the New Deal." The real cleavages begin to take form beneath the public surface.

The masses have learned far more from three years of Roosevelt than from the depths of the Hoover crisis. Labor and the unemployed are beginning to realize more clearly than ever before in U. S. history that the 1936 choice, between finance-capital open and undisguised and finance-capital with a decoration of appealing phrases, is for them no choice at all. They begin to understand that the present upturn in business will necessarily be short-lived, and will in any case and however far it goes be of little benefit to them. They begin to move toward consciousness of class issues.

Growing Sentiment for Class Action

Already this is apparent in the "third-party" sentiment, in the strength of local Farmer-Labor organizations (as in Minnesota), in the Labor party demands appearing within the A. F. of L., and especially in the growing sentiment among the rank and file workers everywhere to settle issues by direct class action, without parliamentary intervention—a sentiment clearly reflected in the stormy A. F. of L. convention. Roosevelt seems to have retained enough of his demagoguery to head this off from national expression in the 1936 campaign, but this can prove only a temporary diversion.

In the meantime, the energies of the far-sighted among the bourgeoisie itself, and of the reformists and betrayers within the working class, are being bent to make sure that this awakening consciousness of class needs and class issues is directed into safe channels. Labor fakers, Socialists, Stalinists, Love-stonites and liberals alike try to move it toward a "sane" third party, toward a Labor or Farmer-Labor or People's Party. Thus would it be able to avoid direct attack against capitalism. The central effort of the revolutionists must be to give this consciousness its authentic expression, to lead it toward the sole historical embodiment of its genuine meaning and the actual needs which it reflects: the revolutionary program and the revolutionary party.

Peoples' Front Cracks In Cabinet Crisis

Continued from Page 1

hanging far out on a lonely limb. The best they can now propose is the substitution for Laval—of a workers' and peasants' government?—no, of Joseph Paul-Boncour or of Theodore Steeg or Laurent Bonnevay or another one of that old school of hardened reactionary politicians at the head of a new cabinet of Republican-Radical coalition! In other words, the substitution of a French von Papen for the French Bruening.

Should the turn of the debate result by any chance in the downfall of Laval another "good Republican" will follow him to continue the Bonapartist regime which is rapidly clearing the road for the

Fascist Croix de Feu. The Front Populaire, cracked wide open, offers no other perspective. The working class parties have thrown their fate into the lap of Herriot and now that the "leftist" Herriot has fallen they've moved farther up the line to a Boncour! Anything, anybody but the struggle for workers' power. Not the workers, but Herriot or Boncour or somebody like them must get in to—disarm the Fascists.

The Fascist Croix de Feu, armed and ready to seize power, looks with contempt on the proceedings in the Bourbon Palace. It jeers at the solemn insistence of Radical, Socialist and Communist depu-

ties that Pierre Laval, their Bonapartist friend, dissolve the Fascist leagues and disarm them. The Croix de Feu is contemptuous because it knows that France's political crisis will be solved not from the tribunes of the Chamber but on the streets, arms in hand.

It jeers because it knows that neither Laval nor any Bonapartist successor to Laval can really dissolve or disarm it—any more than von Papen could dissolve the Nazi storm troopers.

It jeers because it sees its Socialist and Communist opponents concerning themselves alone with the struggle on the parliamentary scene—with shadow boxing which will disappear when the glare of

the real class struggle is turned full force upon it.

Herriot started the defection from the Peoples' Front last week and within the past few days—the rise of the discount rate to 6 per cent and the spectre of devaluation and inflation—turned the defection into a stampede.

During the last five days the whole French crisis reduced itself for these pitiful parliamentarians, Herriot-Blum-Cachin and Co., into whether they should let Laval introduce his budget first or whether they should insist on having their demand for dissolution of the Fascist leagues take precedence over all other issues!

Faced with the flight of the Rad-

Auto Strike Impends

(Continued from Page 1)

dary. A great portion of the machinery of the Chevrolet plant has been moved to Saginaw, Mich. and Muncie, Ind., as was predicted in the NEW MILITANT during the April strike. Toledo is no longer in the key position with regards to the manufacture of transmissions that it held at the time of the last Chevrolet strike. The Saginaw and Muncie plants are completely unorganized. Dillon has no intentions of organizing these plants. The Cleveland Fisher Body union is in a weaker position than it was during the last strike. Norwood, still strong, is only an assembly plant.

Good Time for Strike

General Motors is now deliberately playing its cards, one by one. It is obvious, that what is involved here, is a carefully thought out, carefully prepared plan, to smash the Chevrolet union in Toledo.

There are many factors, however, which make objective conditions in this battle with General Motors even more favorable today than at the time of the last strike. First, this is the beginning of the season, and the automobile industry is experiencing its biggest boom since the golden days of 1929. The Muncie and Saginaw plants can be organized rapidly in the fire attack, through a swift, sharp attack of the flying squadrons. Detroit was moribund at the time of the last strike. Today it is beginning to feel again the first flush of returning confidence. If Toledo, with its great prestige, would give the lead in battle, the Detroit workers, filled with accumulated bitterness and dissatisfaction, might rise up again in a strike that would eclipse the battles of late 1933.

M.E.S.A. Strike in Toledo

The strike called by the M.E.S.A. at the Mather Spring Co. of Toledo entering into its third week. The plant remains shut tight as a drum. After a flat refusal to conduct any negotiations with the men, as "they did not contemplate any reopening of the plant," the management has finally seen the light and consented to meet with the union representatives. The celebrated Toledo Peace Board, set up by McGrady, which was supposed to avert industrial strife in Toledo and was heralded throughout the country as an example to be followed in all other cities, has failed to make one step during the entire three weeks of the strike. Only when the local threatened to spread the strike and the Chevrolet situation was coming to a head did they finally make a move to bring the management to negotiate with the men.

Barberton Labor Plans General Strike

Continued from Page 1

ers arrested. The pickets jeered and swore. They shouted their right to picket.

Children Gassed

Flower replied by ordering his thugs to advance in military array—most of them were veterans. When they approached the picket line, Flower called for them to fire point blank with their tear gas guns. Five workers fell stunned. The thugs leaped to club the blinded workers. Twenty workers succumbed under the brutal attack. A crippled girl, going home for lunch from school, screamed in terror as tear gas scorched her. Three children, not over 10 years old, shrieked as gas shells broke a window in their home and narrowly missed them. A picket, defying the clubs, rushed to the house and carried them out.

An intermittent battle raged all day. The workers reformed their lines constantly, using coal and bricks to retaliate against the attacks. Word spread through the county of the terror. Workers came from Akron and elsewhere to reinforce the picket lines. Barricades were built, torn down, and rebuilt.

Union leaders called a mass meeting to protest the brutalities. All the strikers and 1,000 sympathizers attended while over 2,000 workers and sympathizers remained on the picket line.

Alarmed by the growing strength of the workers, the thugs frantically fired more tear gas as night began to creep over the battle ground.

Tide Turns

A strong wind blowing from the plant towards the pickets shifted. It carried the tear gas fumes back into the factory. Soon the thugs and scabs were gasping for air and retreating.

Three main streams of pickets advanced towards the plant, concealing their movements by first busting the glaring searchlight. A steady battery of rocks answered the thugs. The pickets met the clubs of the thugs in a fierce hand-to-hand battle without flinching. The mighty fist of labor crashed through the gangsterdom of the thugs. The gate-house, main stronghold of the enemy, was seized. Scabs rushed out with a fire hose but the workers brushed them aside. They started towards the plant entrance itself to clean it of scabs, but the wind died down. It took over 150 rounds of tear gas and plenty of re-inforcements for the frightened thugs to keep the plant from being demolished. Even so, the front wall was badly damaged and every window broken.

A solid barricade was built of huge cement blocks and the workers prepared for another attack.

Demand General Strike

When word of the battle reached the mass meeting, it aroused the workers to a fever pitch of indignation against the company. Speaker after speaker told of the terror, women who were hurt demanded that their husbands protect them from the thugs. "No more tear gas or clubs. Disarm the thugs," the workers cried in the meeting. "We want a general strike to defeat the company!" they cried. A committee representing 25 unions was formed to consider and plan the walkout.

The Chamber of Commerce became frightened. It called two preachers and other "impartial" citizens to see what could be done to pacify the workers. This "citizens' committee" called for a truce. Union leaders, worn out from the terrific struggle, their workers tear-gassed, clubbed and exhausted,

agreed on condition that nothing come in or out of the plant and that the thugs stay within the plant. No attacks on the picket line would be tolerated. Such provocation would immediately bring a general strike, the union leaders said.

During the truce period the company refused to discuss even the critical situation. They spurned humble efforts of a federal conciliator who wanted to "ease the situation" by "compromising" the difference; in other words, making a sell-out agreement and trying to fool the workers into acceptance.

Resentment against the company grew as truce expiration time drew near. The "citizens' committee" begged the union leaders to continue it for another 48 hours. They replied they'd present it to a mass meeting Saturday night.

C.I.U. Promises Walkout

The workers, 1,000 strong at the meeting, thundered NO. Call the general strike, they shouted, unless the scabs are removed and the plant closed. We'll go in and take them out ourselves if the sheriff doesn't, voices added. The union leaders looked for Flower. He played hide-and-seek until midnight, and then told them he couldn't do anything. He said this after the disgusted workers left the meeting.

Sunday brought a formal vote by the Central Labor Union for a general strike, to be called anytime needed to aid the strikers. In particular by Monday night, when the truce again expired, if the plant wasn't closed. As the picket line began to grow into the hundreds again today, the sheriff, realizing he was licked, withdrew the scabs and ordered the plant shut.

But the company doesn't like this. If Flower can't break the strike for them, they think the Na-

tional Guard can. So they conferred with an "observer" from Adj.-General Marx's office in Columbus, late today.

Workers Celebrate

Tonight 5,000 workers paraded in a "victory" march over the closing of the plant. A huge mass meeting followed with all organized labor in this district represented and pledging solidarity.

The workers know from the Toledo Auto-Lite strike that the National Guard can be defeated. They confidently face tomorrow, in one powerful united front against the Duponts and their tools, be they thugs or the National Guard. It will take every repressive measure possible under capitalism to keep the workers from victory on the picket line and they know it.

The workers aren't so sure of themselves, however, around the conference table surrounded by Edw. McGrady and other smooth-tongued federal conciliators whose treacherous moves can change a victory into a compromise. But the workers are learning and if McGrady comes here, they will be forewarned against him.

All Unions Involved

One thing is positively certain and realized by every adult in this town of 25,000. There is only one main issue in the strike: "The company is trying to bust the union and then the other unions will also be demolished."

Last year the Mellon-controlled Columbia Chemical Co. officials tried to smash the union here. A picket line of 5,000 workers from Akron and elsewhere brought this company to its knees and the union gained its demands and its leaders were given their jobs back.

Now the Duponts are trying the same stunt. "But we know that a solid front against the capitalists can't be broken and we'll win this strike," a union leader said. . . . And so far it looks that way.

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Where Are the "Valiant" Radicals?

According to the Daily Worker for Nov. 28, the question is: "Shall Laval be overthrown today or has the situation not sufficiently matured? If the Laval government is overthrown, what shall take its place, a People's Front or a Radical Socialist government?"

The issue of the fight against Fascism, it seems, depends entirely upon the stalwart action of—the Delegation of Letts!—and in the final analysis—upon a bourgeois government!

But our Daily Worker writer, who says that a People's Front government would have to be a government of real struggle (sic!) but that the Socialist leaders "do not yet appear prepared" for such a struggle, has not followed his newspapers carefully enough. Cachin, Thorez, Ducloux and Co. decided three weeks ago that a government of the Front Populaire at this juncture "could not be seriously envisaged." (L'Humanite, Nov. 11.) What do they offer in its stead? "A government of the left to replace Laval." A Radical Socialist government, in other words.