

Our Revolutionary Heritage:

Dorr's Rebellion

By Leighton Rigby

AMERICAN WORKERS! WE MUST UNITE! The struggle for bread has thrown us together, has molded our several interests into common ones.

While we are divided, the controllers of wealth are our masters, our rulers. Can we doubt this when city governments always heed the call of the wealthy and send the police to crack our skulls? When the state governments despatch troops to mow us down at factory gates?

They talk of peace on earth, good will toward men. But there can be no peace while workers starve! There can be no good will toward men who force our children to go half-naked, half-fed!

AMERICAN WORKERS! Our own revolutionary heritage can serve to spur us onward. We have always fought against oppression! Let's shout out: REBIRTH, NOT RELIEF! ONWARD TO THE WORKERS' STATE AND CONSISTENT DEMOCRACY!!

New Oppression, New Revolts

When the workers and farmers who had fought for the "right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" returned to their homes at the close of the War for Independence, they were not long in grasping their real position.

Their oppressors were the money lenders, the land owners and speculators, the slavers and the industrialists. The oppressed were jailed for debts, branded for minor crimes, lashed and enslaved. To tell all the "punitive" measures in use would be to fill several columns.

In New Hampshire, several hundred workers and farmers, armed with muskets and clubs, marched on Exeter. They demanded of the general court a reduction in taxes and paper money with which to pay their debts. Troops drove them away.

In Vermont, Thomas Lee, a veteran who returned home to be quickly jailed for debts, led a march on Rutland, demanding that lawyers be excluded from the court. The marchers further insisted upon cancellation of their many debts and other relief measures.

Then came Shay's rebellion and, close on its heels, the "venerable" Constitution. It was not until fifty years had passed that the discussion entered into by the framers of the Constitution was revealed.

The document was plainly inspired by the ruling classes to be used in their interests. What was said behind locked doors at the constitutional convention was not made public until after the aged James Madison had died. The reasons are obvious.

Freedom for Property Owners But the Constitution failed to put an end to rebellions. Oppression still continued, as it does today, even if it was made legal in the prettified of words.

Most of the state constitutions, if not all, spoke of man's "free and equal" creation, but their bodies shamefully covered up the implications in the preambles.

Dorr's Rebellion was a manifestation of militancy on the part of the non-landholding class in Rhode Island. Led by Thomas Wilson, Dorrr, this armed uprising brought about what could not have been accomplished in any other way.

Peaceful Action Unsuccessful At least six peaceful attempts were made to scrap the old colonial charter of Rhode Island in favor of a new constitution.

But the legislature under the charter did not sit idly by through the growing storm. Late in March that body enacted the "Algerine" law, declaring all meetings such as the People's Convention illegal.

Dual Government in R.I. Disregarding the Algerine law, the workers held an election on April 18 under the People's Constitution. Dorrr was elected governor, and on May 3 he was inducted into office.

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The Armed Assault

On May 17, four hundred insurrectionists, led by Dorrr, gained possession of two cannons and a few muskets. Late at night, they marched to seize the town arsenal.

Again the workers tried on June 25. But martial law was declared, and the jails bulged with political prisoners. A price of five thousand dollars was put on the head of the People's governor.

Dorr returned to Providence on October 31 of the following year and was immediately arrested. He was faced by a jury made up of "Algerines," naturally hostile to him, and was sentenced to life imprisonment.

The People's Constitution was maneuvered out of existence. Dorrr had the satisfaction, however, of seeing a fairly acceptable substitute put in its place.

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WPA FACTS-- POLICIES

(Continued from Page 1)

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There is a "basic tie-up" between the trade union movement, the WPA and the unemployed: in a program and action. There is a crisis: no worker in private industry is sure of his job; the unemployed have no jobs nor prospects of jobs.

Will the unemployed, the WPA and the trade unions fight together? This has been answered even before the WPA was called into existence—and conclusively proved in the past two months.

How to organize the field? WPA thus far seems to be confined to the eastern and mid-western sections of the country, mostly in the larger cities. Almost universally the project local is the basis of organization.

By ARNE SWABECK

The complete stenographic report, printed in the Daily Worker for Dec. 14, fully confirms the unusual character of the Browder-Thomas debate, held in the New York Madison Square Garden on November 27.

Norman Thomas defended militantly the position of the Socialist Party. It was, of course, not the position of the Social Democracy of 1914 nor the position of the Old Guard.

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The Lines Cross

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IV. ORGANIZATION

Organization! It is indispensable; it is invincible! In the recent strike in early August in New York, its power carried the first strike of WPA workers to speedy victory—against General Johnson's threat and ultimatum: "This is a strike against the government, against the people of the United States."

Browder had thoughts only for an escape from the pointed charges made by Thomas. Throughout the debate he reiterated continuously in the most garrulous, cringing and groveling fashion his plea for unity: "Why can't we unite on a wide campaign? ... Why can't we work jointly in these mass organizations? ... Why can't we unite forces to begin building? ... Why don't we do it?"

The important points, however, aside from the question of internal form of organization stand out clearly: WPA is designed to still the militancy of unemployed and use them as a force against the union movement and the standard of living.

The answers are clear as well. I. For prevailing wage standards on WPA projects: 6 hour day, 5 day week, \$30 a week.

II. For joint strike actions of unions, WPA, unemployed.

III. For a joint national fight for social unemployment insurance. Tie up the WPA fight with the unions and we strengthen the fight of the progressives within the A. F. of L. against the reactionary leadership.

The Significance of the Browder-Thomas Debate for the Revolutionary Movement

front not only for the everyday struggles of the workers, but also for the defeat of the class enemy: "Comrades," he said, "let me put the question sharply: Between today and a future victory of Fascism in the United States there stands historically only one thing—a powerful people's anti-Fascist front, a Farmer-Labor Party."

No, this is false to the core: Between today and a future victory of Fascism there stands first of all the historic necessity of a revolutionary party and a revolutionary policy. Only with this essential prerequisite can a united front defeat Fascism.

To Norman Thomas this new "line" of the C. P. appeared bewildering and unreal. He undoubtedly had in mind the frantic pleas for unity. Otherwise the new "line" stood out in a very real sense in every issue touched upon in the debate.

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The Franco-Soviet Pact

Thomas did assert that it troubled him a little to see his "Communist friends make more love to Herriot than to Leon Blum." This love-making, however, flows from definite political considerations and from the kind of political considerations which have now become the guiding line for Soviet foreign policy under the Stalin regime.

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The Smell of Oil

Turning to the question of the League of Nations and sanctions, Thomas remained aggressively critical. When seeking to dramatize his point by saying he wished he could address himself to the dead amongst the Ethiopian and Italian soldiers who had "fallen because of Italy's use of tanks driven by oil sold by the Soviet Republic," he was greeted with boos and hisses from the largest section of the audience which was made up of Stalinist sympathizers.

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gible outside of the dastardly Hoare-Laval "peace" plan for the dismemberment of Ethiopia. Sanctions, in the thieves jargon of diplomacy, means war.

What were the positions presented on the question of the defense of the Soviet Union? On this point Browder spoke without equivocation. Picturing an attack by Germany and Japan upon the Soviet Union, he asked: "Will the militant Socialists adopt a position of neutrality? Will they advocate the slogan 'Keep America Out of War?'"

And what did Browder have to say on this question? He brushed it aside in a very simple bureaucratic fashion. To him this criticism had no significance whatever, for had not "the Socialists and Communists registered a tremendously big increase in votes" in the municipal elections? But this, Mr. Browder, entirely begs the question.

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Lecture "INTELLECTUALS AND THE COMING WAR" Speakers: JAMES BURNHAM of Philosophy Dept., N. Y. Univ. NATHAN GOULD National Secretary S. Y. L. Friday, Dec. 20th, 8:15 P.M. Stayvessant Casino 9th St. and Second Avenue Aus: International Workers School

BRANCH 1 LECTURE A lecture on organic unity between the S. P. and C. P. will be given the following Friday, Jan. 3, 1936, at 8 P.M. under the joint auspices of S.Y.L. and W.P. at Branch 1, 320 East 14th Street.

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