

The Massachusetts "Red" Investigation: A Further Stage in C. P. Degeneration

By Hal Draper

The investigation of the Communist Party by the special Investigating Commission set up by the Massachusetts State Legislature marked a new stage in the unfolding of the Stalinist line. The result of this investigation received scant notice except in the Boston press, but it is necessary to make the workers aware of the exact degree of degeneracy that the Stalinist movement has reached.

Three thousand dollars was appropriated for this inquiry to investigate "subversive propaganda in Massachusetts—Communist, Nazi and Fascist," which is a successor of a similar investigation of the C.P. about two years ago. The Commission as set up provided for three additional appointees by the Governor, who thereupon named three former State Commanders of the American Legion—Rose, Paul and Halloran.

Frankfeld Eats His Words

The C.P. denounced these three gentlemen as "notorious red-baiters," which was only stating the facts. But when Halloran confronted Phil Frankfeld (secretary of the Massachusetts C.P.) with these "insults," Frankfeld backwatered. "I wish now to apologize for the statement," he said; and all was forgiven.

Senator Burke, who was the most aggressive in his questioning during the hearing, was labeled an "illiterate" by the C.P. This was substantiated by the hearings—he pronounced bourgeoisie "boor-ga-wa-zee" for example—but it is not on record that Burke objected to this characterization.

It is indicative of the intent of the hearings that the testimony was recorded only by a Police Department stenographer, not by the Commission itself. The legislators felt apparently that they were just setting the stage for the cops to listen in. The Commission received only carbon copies of the police transcripts, and the official record of the proceedings is still not available. The quotations given in these articles are all taken from the Boston press—the Globe, Post, and Herald (none of them a Hearst paper, by the way)—which covered the case quite completely, citing much of the testimony verbatim. The accounts in these papers check against each other, though only one may be quoted here for any question.

There can be no doubt—and this appears also from the hearings—that shortly before the investigation started, the national leaders of the C.P. held a conclave to determine their strategy. The sense of their deliberations one can imagine: "Boys, we've hedged up to now and used weasel-words, but now we have to come clean. We've got to go the whole hog." And they went the whole hog.

The Stalinists Confess

Before the investigation started, the State Committee of the C.P. published a pamphlet entitled "A Confession of Faith," with the slogan: "Let the Truth Be Known to the People of Massachusetts." This pamphlet, one of the most degrading ever issued by any working-class organization, is sold only in Massachusetts and is unobtainable elsewhere. It begins properly enough with some extra-fancy belly-crawling before the Commission. The C.P. is addressing the American Legion commander, illiterate red-

baiters and assorted fat-boys making up the Commission:

"Dear Madam and Gentlemen: In connection with the investigation you are now conducting, we wish to offer you our most sincere and hearty cooperation.... We believe that your Committee through this investigation can perform a truly distinct and great service to the people of our State and to the cause of Democracy...."

Unbiased Red-baiters

"The spirit of fair play will undoubtedly characterize the investigation. Any and all prejudices will be cast to the winds beforehand, and your Committee will enter upon the investigation in a truly judicial spirit. We Communists expect that we shall come before a tribunal unbiased towards the Minority Party in whose name we appear and speak... As legislators of our great Commonwealth, you will, we are confident, protect and safeguard the inalienable right of all American citizens to free speech, free assembly and a free press...."

All this refers to Calvin Coolidge's Great Commonwealth where an "unbiased tribunal" murdered Sacco and Vanzetti "in a truly judicial spirit!"

The confession, of course, goes in extensively for American traditions in the heavy-handed C.P. style. Earl Browder becomes a "Yankee revolutionist" and Brook Farm is singled out "to prove that modern Communism is Twentieth Century Americanism."

People's Front — Mayflower Product

And it would seem also that even the People's Front came over on the Mayflower: "The People's Front in Massachusetts would be a continuation under present day conditions of the same kind of People's Front that was established against British tyranny in 1776 and against slavery in 1861"—which is true enough since both were movements on behalf of American capitalism, when it was progressive.

Today when American capitalism has become reactionary imperialism, the People's Front is still advocated by the C.P. in order to preserve it. "The People's Front," defines the pamphlet, "is a movement for improvement and reform under present day society and conditions"—purely a movement to reform capitalism.

The entire tenor of the Confession has one aim: to convince the legislators that the C.P. is no danger to anything they hold dear, and that in two ways: first, by proving that they, the Stalinists, do not want to overthrow capitalism, and secondly, by abjectly describing how they are too weak to do it if they wanted to. The first statement will be proved in the next article; the second appears from the Confession.

No Danger

"The reactionaries deliberately exaggerate our strength and influence," it reads. "We Communists are the best and most realistic judges of ourselves." And it repudiates the "slander" that

the C.P. has mass influence by giving figures: a membership of only 1,000 in the state; its vote only 6,000; its budget only about \$8,000, etc. And from this it draws the moral that the legislators really shouldn't be afraid of the C.P.

"They know we are no danger. They know that we do not, never have, and never will threaten democracy!"

Other aspects of the Confession will be considered later under the proper head, but we must cite its contribution to the subject of "Family Life and Communism." The Communist Manifesto likewise takes up this question, it will be remembered, and the clownishness of the Stalinists becomes evident in comparison.

Some Twentieth Century Beliefs

"Communists do not believe in free love. Communists believe in getting married according to the given statutes of our Commonwealth and living in wedlock. Communists believe in having children and raising families."

Clownish as it is, this statement is the reflection of the new attitude toward the role and privileges of women that has developed in Stalin's Russia.

In this world of respectable, law-abiding, God-fearing and child-bearing Communists, the breath of the class struggle is a profanation, and indeed not a whisper of it can be found anywhere in the Confession. Its existence is not mentioned or even hinted at. It belongs to a different world.

In the next article, we shall take up the answers of the Stalinist spokesmen before the Commission with regard to their attitude toward overthrowing the government, toward force and violence, toward socialism through the ballot—that is, their attitude on the most elementary principles of revolutionary Marxism.

N. Y. Membership Meeting Sunday

Local New York, Socialist Party (Left Wing), announces an important membership meeting to be held Sunday, December 19th, at 2:30 P. M.—at Manhattan Plaza—66 East 4th Street.

LaGuardia and the Gravediggers

With Mayor LaGuardia threatening to send in City employees as strikebreakers, the strike of gravediggers at the Greenwood Cemetery, Brooklyn was ended last week. The men returned to work, "pending probable appointment of a fact-finding committee by Mayor LaGuardia to study conditions at the cemetery and recommend possible changes." The committee is "probable," the recommendations "possible," the return to work "definite." The strikers are members of the United Cemetery Workers Union, C.I.O. The Mayor is a member of the A.L.P.

Relief Sit-Down Ends In Settlement

Protesting against delays in assisting relief applicants 76 men women and children staged a sit-down in the Department of Public Welfare building, 376 Lafayette Street, New York. After some 60 hours during which no food was allowed to enter the building the strike was settled with a promise of immediate action on the 25 cases which were the direct cause of the sit-down.

C. P. Disrupts Alliance; Drives To Expel Harrison

Charging Neil Harrison, chairman of Local 15 of the Workers' Alliance and an active member of the Progressive Group, with calling "bureaucrats" and "dictators" by their proper names and with agitating for and engaging in militant aggressive actions for the unemployed, the

Stalinist leadership of the Workers' Alliance has moved for his expulsion. This action, but one of a series of similar steps taken earlier in New York City, is in harmony with the general campaign of disruption, expulsion, slander and revocation of charters carried on by the Communist Party and its stooges in the Workers' Alliance all across the country including Chicago, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, State of Washington, etc.

Tries to Discredit Progressives

The action against Harrison was first made officially at the City Central Committee of the Unemployed Division of the Workers' Alliance held December 3. At this meeting Chairman Jerome Benton in his report to the Central Committee stated that: (1) stool pigeons had been sent into the Workers' Alliance by the Administration; (2) that other stool pigeons had developed within the organization. He then launched into an attack on the Progressive Group and Neil Harrison in particular. For more than an hour this young bureaucrat, plagiarizing from the old-time reactionary union leaders in their attempts to discredit progressive opponents, did everything he could to discredit Harrison and his group.

Proving their oft-proclaimed "love of democracy," Harrison was allowed three minutes—no more—to reply. Harrison used these brief minutes to pose questions to the leadership in line with the program of the Progressive Group. "Why not fight against the anti-union signs in the home relief bureaus? Why was the Washington march held after Congress adjourned? Why no fight on the part of the Alliance against the gradual elimination of the Workers' Alliance from the bureaus?"

Embarrassing Questions

"Why no fight against the dismissal of 'aliens' from W.P.A.?" Harrison was "answered" by over two hours of slanderous attacks by members of the Communist Party, in which he was called all the names in the Stalinist repertoire: "procuree," "stool pigeon," "thief," etc. Only two opponents of the Stalinists, Bertha Butler and Larry Selman, were allowed three minutes each. Harrison was not allowed to reply. Following this barrage of slander,

Chairman Benton, in the name of the Executive Committee, proposed charges be presented against Harrison. Immediately a stooge made the motion, which was carried by the C.P. majority.

The Charges

The written charges presented include the following: That Harrison called the W. A. leaders bureaucrats and dictators; that he wrote an article in which he said that members of the Alliance stoned a relief administrator; that he tried to cause "bloodshed and hysteria" at the relief bureaus; that he permitted "degenerate expelled members" of the Alliance to speak at meetings; that he organized the Progressive Group, "a dual organization within the Workers' Alliance".

The Progressive Group is determined to fight against this expulsion to the end. They have been heartened in the fight by the letter sent to the Alliance by Charles Mack, Chairman of Local 17. The letter follows:

W. A. Official Resigns In Protest

"W. A. of G. N. Y. Unemployed Section Executive committee:

I hereby resign from the adjustment committee of the Unemployed Section of the W. A.

My reasons for resigning are the bureaucratic methods pursued in expelling militants from the W. A. for daring to express honest opinions within the ranks of the W. A. This, in my opinion, is the outcome of the desire of the leadership of the W. A. to drive out anyone who does not agree with them. This policy is being carried out in all parts of the country and is wrecking the organization.

The culmination of this procedure here in N. Y. C. is the slanderous attack upon Neil Harrison at the delegates council meeting—an attack such as would not be tolerated in any other trade union.

I have served faithfully the Workers' Unemployed Committee, the Workers' Unemployed Union, and the Workers' Alliance. I refuse to be used as a front and a stooge for the Communist Party leadership in the W. A.

Very truly yours,
(Signed) Charles Mack
Member Adjustment Comm.,
Member of City Executive
Committee of W.A. Unemployed Division.

Christmas Eve Dance

Friday, December 24th, at 9 P. M.

IRVING PLAZA
15th STREET AND IRVING PLACE

Tickets: In Advance 55 cents — At the door 75 cents

For Sale at: Labor Book Shop, 28 East 12th St.

AUSPICES: Convention Arrangements Committee
Socialist Party (Left Wing)