

# Revolutionary Tasks And The Trade Unions

Veteran Of Trade Union Battles Analyzes The Present Industrial Scene And Presents SWP Fighting Program

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A Marxist understanding of the state and of the role of the revolutionary party as the vanguard of the class, without which that class cannot raise itself to power, results in our having a different attitude towards work in the trade unions than that held by any other organization claiming to represent the American workers.

Alone of all parties in the United States, the Socialist Workers Party advocates that only a Workers and Farmers government, basing itself upon nation-wide councils of elected representatives of the workers and farmers, can solve the economic and social problems facing the masses. It flows from this concept that our party must extend its influence to all sections of the economic organizations of the workers and farmers—particularly of the workers, because it is the working class that will lead all the oppressed in the onslaught on capitalism and the fight for a socialist America and a socialist world.

### Other Groups

Because the Socialist Labor Party and the IWW answered "no" to the question: shall revolutionists work in reactionary trade unions? they doomed themselves to sterility.

Because the Socialist Party and the Lovestone group have degraded socialist policies to the level of trade union politics, their work in the mass movement has not resulted in diverting the labor movement from subservience to the capitalists.

The movement for the Fourth International took shape in America and throughout the world, not only in the fight against the theories of "socialism in one country," of "social fascism," etc., but in the struggle against the theory of dual "red" unionism fostered by the Communist International until 1935. Lenin in 1920 had demonstrated theoretically, in his "Left Communism," that for communists to turn their backs on reactionary unions and invent new "revolutionary" unions was to render "the greatest service to the bourgeoisie."

### The Reactionary Stalinists

But the Communist Parties throughout the world had long since turned their backs on Leninism. When the "Communists" re-entered the trade unions following 1934 they continued to wear the leading strings of the counter-revolutionary Stalinist bureaucracy in Russia. With the drift to the right of Soviet policy, the trade union work of Browder's party has developed to the point where today this group is the most reactionary force in the labor movement. Whereas the fortunes of the Greens and the Hillmans are, after all, bound up with the fortunes of the movements which they head, the fortunes of the Stalinist unions derive from Sattin and his clique.

Unlike the Communist Party which up until the spring of 1937 favored the AFL over the CIO only to swing overnight to the other extreme, the Socialist Workers Party has no fetishism for either set of initials.

### Mistakes of the CIO

The CIO has accomplished a great historic task in organizing the heavy industries, a task that the craft unions could never have accomplished. The new CIO unions succeeded, not only because they were industrial in form but because they utilized militant and revolutionary tactics (sit-down strikes etc.) to gain their goal. Had the CIO continued its original policy of organizing the unorganized, of concentrating on the basic industries, of avoiding raids on established AFL unions, there is little doubt but that, despite the

blows of the depression, it would today be in a far better position in the American labor movement.

Desperate for organizers, Lewis committed a tragic error in opening wide the doors to the Stalinists in return for their unconditional support.

### Poison!

Weakened by the defeat of "Little Steel" and the hammer-blows of the new depression, the CIO organism could not shake off the Stalinist poison. On the West Coast and elsewhere the Communist-controlled CIO has followed a brutal and callous antiworking class policy of raiding the AFL, of violating the picket lines of unions under the control of the progressives. In Minneapolis, the Stalinized section of the CIO has not hesitated to connive with the bosses against the AFL, even to appeal to the courts for an injunction against the latter.

On November 14 in Pittsburgh the CIO will hold its first national convention, at which will be decided the question of who is to control that body: the workers or the Stalinists in a bloc with Lewis or other CIO leaders. It can be said bluntly that only to the extent to which the CIO rids itself of Stalinism can it recover its lost ground and develop.

### The Strength of the AFL

A phenomenon not sufficiently appreciated by the students of the labor movement—the manner in which the AFL has not only withstood the effects of the depression and the competition of the CIO, but has even managed to gain a million new members. The AFL, having an experienced organizing staff and great sums of money at its disposal, was better able than the CIO to take advantage of the ground-swell of organization which swept across the country, and to stabilize itself when the newly organized unions faced the ravages of the depression.

Despite the Greens, the Wolls and Tracys and Freys—incurably narrow-minded, selfish, jealous, divorced from the ranks—the AFL finds itself, after three years of the CIO, with a membership approaching the all-time peak figures of 1919. To be sure, the AFL, in the struggle to maintain itself, has used the organizational forms and even, at times, the militant tactics, which it officially condemned in the CIO. This has a special meaning for us.

### Toward Unity

The AFL convention recently ended in Houston was marked by the fight which Tobin led against the executive council for unification of the AFL and CIO. Tobin today finds himself and his International Union in a commanding position in the American labor movement. The Brotherhood of Teamsters is the largest national body in the Federation and has an almost unlimited field for expansion. With the strategic position of the drivers in American industry, the IBT can play an important role in unifying the movement.

It is evident that unless labor succeeds in itself unifying its armies, Roosevelt, acting for American capitalism, will intercede to bring about unity from outside and above, in a way that can only have disastrous consequences for the independence of the trade unions.

### THE UNEMPLOYED

Of the 35,000,000 workers, almost half are today unemployed. Any trade union policy that does not provide for these unemployed will bring disaster to the working class.

The A. F. L. nationally has disregarded the problem.

The C. I. O. under the pressure of the depression, which hit the mass industries harder than the skilled trades, has after too much delay tackled the problem in many

# PARTY BACKS AGE PENSIONS!

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cessities and luxuries of life for every person young and old. What stands in the way? Why can't the machines be put to work to provide for human needs? What monstrous power condemns the producers to live in poverty; to the indignity of subsisting on crumbs that fall from the tables of the rich? Even a child knows that the owner of the means of production who has only one motive—profit—is that power.

The annual national income is 60 billion dollars—this is not enough to feed and clothe everyone adequately. But if everyone worked who wanted to work the national income would be much higher and more people would get the necessities of life. And if "over" produced food were not destroyed there would be still more! In the bosses' hands is the wealth we have produced.

### Our Solution

The Socialist Workers Party proposes: Expropriate the wealth of the exploiters! Take over the means of production and put it to use for all! To the millions in the Pension movement we say: We march with you! We act with you! They are strike-breakers who preach sermons at the workers and then break the ranks in action. We will vote for Proposition No. 25 because it voices the demand for security in a world of plenty. We are confident that the experience of the hopelessness of "reform" will teach every worker that the road of struggle against capitalism is the only one.

The road of the Pension Plan is futile. It is sidetracking the main struggle. But without hesitation we march with you on this side road with the hope and conviction that we will, in time, and in union step forward on the main highway of the battle for a world of freedom and emancipation, for a Socialist World!

localities On the initiative of progressives, many C. I. O. unions have unemployed sections, thereby binding the jobless to their working brothers. In areas like Detroit, these unemployed sections have achieved tremendous proportions and have been a major factor in maintaining the union's hold on the workers.

Both bodies of the new united movement will have to intervene much more vigorously on behalf of the unemployed: if the jobless millions are to be saved from fascism.

### POLITICAL ACTION

No sooner had the C. I. O. organized the great basic industries when the new economic crisis posed problems which the unions could not solve. The C. I. O. was forced to take steps toward independent political action of the working class. These first moves have been timid and bureaucratic. Nevertheless, they represent an advance over the Gompers tradition, and it is the duty of progressives to encourage this process and to give to the growing movement a bold program.

### HISTORIC ROLE OF S. W. P.

No one claims that our party has said the last word on the problem of the relationships between the revolutionary party and the trade unions, or that we have achieved the final pat formula which will guide us in all the twists and turns of an American union movement that is becoming increasingly complex. But our policies are Bolshevik policies and represent the accumulated experience of decades in the world union movement.

Armed with these policies, our cadres can attract all that is healthy in the movement, can expand into proletarian armies that will lead behind them the American masses in the revolutionary onslaught against the cruel system which is preparing only greater misery, and against the insanities of imperialist war.

# CAN THE UNITED STATES AFFORD SOCIAL SECURITY!

"Is the demand for \$30 a week a reasonable demand? This is an oft heard question these days, as the campaign around the Pension Plan reaches its close. We present here figures indicating the answer!

In the last several years so great has been the concern over the inability of our economic system to provide the needs of life to all people that several studies have been made of our country's resources and the distribution of its income. The most authentic and widely accepted report is that issued by Brookings Institute. In a pamphlet summarizing the results of an investigation on "America's capacity to Produce and Consume" a glimmer of the truth is exposed to view.

### Even Then!

In 1929, year of "prosperity", six million families (21% of the total number of 27½ million families in this country) received incomes of less than \$1,000 per year.

Twelve (12) million or more than 42% obtained less than \$500 per year. Two (2) million or 8% had an excess of \$5000. 600,000 or 2.3% received over \$10,000 per year.

### Top and Bottom

The vast difference in the distribution of wealth is glaringly exposed by the following figures: In the upper brackets, only 36,000 families or 0.1% of the total obtained a total income of 9.8 billion dollars; 11,653,000 families or 42% of the total, receiving less than \$1500 a year, obtained a total of 10 billion dollars.

The study informs us that while \$2000 a year is the minimum re-

quired to furnish a family with the basic necessities of life, 60% of the total families in the country received less than that sum!

### It Can Be Done!

Compare the above figures with the following:

If American industry were operating at full capacity of the 1929 level—operating for PUBLIC USE not PRIVATE EXPLOITATION—all incomes below \$3500 could be raised 42% and these 16.4 million families earning under \$2000 could have an income of at least \$2000 per year.

These figures mean that in 1929 the year of our "great prosperity" the majority of our people could not satisfy their basic necessities under capitalism while living in a country with sufficient material resources to furnish enough goods for all—if those goods were available to their makers!

### We Have Earned Them!

It must be remembered that a worker on reaching the age of 50 has spent the most fruitful period of his life helping to create by his labor all the great wealth in this country. The worker alone has created these riches, for wealth and commodities are the product of labor.

Is it any wonder that now, after nine years of promises and alibis, that the people knowing that our resources are adequate to supply the needs of ALL, state frankly, "Give us economic security, grant us a fair return on what we produce! We have a right to live; we shall defend and secure that right!"

# OUR IMMEDIATE PROGRAM

(See Editorial)

In the struggle to prevent the capitalists from saddling the cost of the economic crisis on the backs of the working class the Socialist Workers Party advocates:

1. Re-opening of all idle factories under workers' control. The necessary capital for this enterprise to be supplied by the government from a steeply graduated tax on incomes.

2. Huge slum clearance and housing program to be financed by allocating the enormous Roosevelt war chest which is now being used to prepare for the next war. Wages on these projects to be at least union standard.

3. A sliding scale of hours. This means a reduction of hours in every industry, without reduction of wages, sufficient to absorb the remainder of unemployed.

To prevent the bosses from successfully organizing armed bands of fascist mercenaries and destroying the workers' organizations as they did in Italy and Germany, the S. W. P. proposes the immediate formation of WORKERS DEFENSE GUARDS in every union. This precautionary measure is already being taken by workers in Minneapolis and Akron.

In the struggle against Imperialist war the S. W. P. fights for:

1. A referendum vote of the people on war. While such a referendum would not prevent war it would make it much clearer to all just who was for and who against plunging the world into another blood bath.

2. The transfer of all war funds for the relief of the unemployed.

3. Immediate withdrawal of all armed forces of the United States from territory outside our boundaries, particularly those now in the Far East.

4. Immediate freedom for all colonial possessions and "protectorates" of United States Imperialism (Phillipines, Haitai, etc.)

These transitional demands are not "cure alls," they are simply point out immediate battle lines in the march to the goal.

A SOCIALIST UNITED STATES IN A FEDERATED UNITED WORKER'S STATES OF THE WORLD!