

Socialist Appeal

Vol. II - No. 19. Saturday, May 7, 1938
 Published every week by the
SOCIALIST APPEAL PUBLISHING ASS'N.
 at 116 University Place, New York, N. Y.
 Telephone: National Office: ALgonquin 4-8547
 Subscriptions: \$2.00 per year; \$1.00 for 6
 months. Foreign: \$2.50 per year. Bundle order
 3 cents per copy. Single copies 5 cents.
 All checks and money orders should be made
 out to the Socialist Appeal.
 Entered as second-class matter September 1,
 1937 at the post office at New York, New York,
 under the Act of March 3, 1879.
MAX SHACHTMAN
 Editor.
HAROLD ROBERTS FRANK GRAVES
 Associate Editors.
S. STANLEY
 Business Manager.

LaFollette's New Party

Whatever its immediate prospects may be—and they do not now look particularly bright—the National Progressives of America, the new party launched by the LaFollette dynasty, has great significance.

The deepening social crisis in the United States is breaking down the old party machines and lines, by means of which capitalism has been able to dominate the country for decades. The old Democratic party is breaking up before our eyes under the impact of the crisis. New political alignments are on the order of the day. In these new alignments, the American working class is destined to play a tremendously important part; if it develops in the right direction, its part will be decisive.

Up to the present, the working class of this country has not yet taken the bold and imperatively needed step of independent working class political action, of developing a mass political party of its own, upon which it can rely to fight militantly for its class interests. The unprecedented crisis, the bankruptcy of even the most advanced of the capitalist panacea-mongers—the New Dealers—the organization of the basic industries into powerful unions—these and other new factors are creating the premises for such working class political developments.

Once the American workers have a militant political party of their own—not a piddling party of reformists pleading for mercy on their knees, but a robust party of struggle—they are invincible. No capitalist power could effectively resist them.

Conscious of this danger to their continued dominance, the capitalist politicians and their good servants in the labor movement are pondering the problem of how to head off the independent political movement of the workers, how to canalize it back into the old ruts, how to keep it in harness and in check. On all sides, the feelers and plans and proposals for the formation of a "third party"—that is, another capitalist party that does not have quite the same reactionary stigma that the two old ones have—are calculated to head off the movement for class political action.

The "National Progressives of America"—the party without a program—is one such heading-off movement. Its bosses know that the discontent of the masses is rising; they know that there is a growing disillusionment with Roosevelt and the New Deal. Their aim is to exploit this discontent and disillusionment, not for the workers—they vigorously deny that they will be a party of the workers, and not for a socialist reorganization of rotten capitalist society—for they hate the thought of socialism more than they hate anything else, but for their own narrow political purposes.

It is interesting that Roosevelt, who feels the ground beginning to slip from under him, has not denounced the LaFollette party. He too is not unaware that a new political set-up is required for him and his bankrupt crew to win the coming presidential elections. Last time, for example, it was necessary to corral the New York labor vote under the banner of the pro-Roosevelt (that is, pro-capitalist) American Labor Party, because it couldn't be done, at least not

so easily, under the banner of the malodorous Democratic Party. Next time, in 1940 or even in 1938, the "democratic" capitalist politicians may find it necessary to use a "third party" set-up similar to that of the LaFollettes towards the same end. In turn, the LaFollettes and their blood-brothers elsewhere hope to organize sufficient of a movement to have as a bargaining force, as so many voting cattle to be traded off in the behind-the-doors negotiations in which the capitalist politicians settle their affairs.

The National Progressives have nothing progressive about them. They reflect a genuinely progressive current that is growing among the masses, but they reflect it in a distorted manner. They express this progressive current, but in a reactionary manner. Their aim is to dam and drain off this current so that it does not pour stormily over the crumbling bulwarks of a rotting, bankrupt social order—and there is nothing progressive about that.

The LaFollette party is a challenge—one of many to come in the next period, according to all indications—a challenge to the American working class. It is a demand that the workers, who are moving instinctively towards militant action, towards an aggressive political movement of their own class, should halt and turn back to the leadership of the capitalist class or the middle class—which comes to the same thing in the end. The only effective answer that the workers can give to these gentlemen is a reinforced drive to appear on the political scene under their own flag, in their own organization, with their own objectives, and with the unambiguous determination to war to the hilt against the system, and the parties supporting it, which bring them unemployment, wage-cuts, misery, and war—which cannot either feed, clothe or shelter them, and whose only solution for the "surplus" population is the graveyard of the battlefield.

China's Victories

With the Chinese victory at Taierchhwang, in southern Shantung, still reverberating around the world, the invading armies of Japanese imperialism are experiencing new difficulties in their attempted drive toward the Lunghai Railway—difficulties which offer prospect of developing into a severe rout.

After the loss of Taierchhwang a month ago, the Japanese command was compelled to withdraw troops from Shansi in the West in order to fill in their shattered lines in southern Shantung. The weakened Japanese fronts in Shansi are now reported to have been completely shattered, while difficulties continue to pile up on the Shantung front.

Chinese advances deal fresh blows to the false notion of Japanese military invincibility upon which the morale of the Japanese peasant soldiers is so largely sustained. They are also a stirring tribute to the fighting qualities of the Chinese soldiers, their matchless courage, their splendid spirit of opposition to conquest by the imperialist bandits of Dai Nippon.

The entire world of labor and especially the revolutionists will greet China's victories. But the war against the Japanese imperialists for China's freedom is far from over. We have pointed out before and we emphasize again that inspiration for final victory can only come from the unfolding of a far-reaching social program for the Chinese masses—a program which will give them a more vital interest in the war. Without this, the victories now being won will remain only episodes in a struggle whose end can only be defeat—if not by Japan alone, then by Japan's market-hungry rivals.

The scope of Japan's difficulties can be seen from the fact that the Japanese Government is already obliged to invoke the provisions of the Mobilization Law, which will place the country under a virtual military dictatorship.

More defeats for Japanese arms in China will inevitably stir revolt in Japan, where the masses are being saddled with the entire cost of Japan's imperialistic venture.

Labor Has Strong Arms, Too



Inside the N. Y. Painters' Union

1. The Painting Industry Today

The following is the first of a series on conditions among painters in New York and the problems of militants in the Painters Union.

Among the industries hardest hit by the economic crisis tearing at the vitals of the country since 1929 are those grouped under the general heading of building trades. The building booms of previous years which gave rise to an aristocracy of labor organized into job-trusts—better known as the building trades craft unions: bricklayers, carpenters, plumbers, painters, etc.—are gone, never to return again as long as capitalism exists. No amount of "pump-priming," no amount of artificial stimulation through paper housing schemes by the New Deal messiahs has in the slightest degree alleviated the sorry conditions in this field. Nor is there any prospect of genuine improvement—although the majority of the population lives in squalid hovels unfit for human existence—as long as the basis of economy remains the profit motive rather than the needs of the masses of the people.

Building trades unions, previously basing themselves upon new construction work, are now kept alive mainly by alteration and maintenance work—a field which had been left entirely unorganized before the depression. Although the unions have by and large ceased being "job trusts" and opened their books, this new field of operation still remains, in the main, unorganized.

Difficulties of Organization

Thus, for instance, in the painting industry, out of a total approximating 50,000 men employed, no more than 11,000 are members of the Brotherhood of Painters, Decorators and Paperhangers in New York City. The character of the industry is such as to make organization extremely difficult. First, because there are no plants or areas—as in other industries—to concentrate on. Every building, every ship, every structure in the city is a potential shop for the painter. Secondly, painting contractors are so numerous that it is almost impossible to keep track of all of them. Anyone who has a small capital can invest it and become a painting boss.

Yet, the industry must be organized if even those meager union standards that exist in some shops are to be maintained. For, many hotels, banks, insurance companies, real estate firms—who control the largest share of maintenance and alteration work in the city—employ maintenance workers who for a monthly wage of anywhere from \$80 to \$90 do the painting in the buildings where they work. The Brotherhood, which has agreements with a number of contractors organized in the Master Painters Association and with

some independents, has practically no foothold in the field dominated by the hotels, banks, insurance companies etc.

Effect On Wages

Official union wages are set in the standard agreement at \$10.50 per 7-hour day. Actually, wages in union shops range from \$10.50 down to \$7 and the hours from seven up to eight or more per day, on the basis of a 5-day week. Non-union wages range anywhere from \$3 to \$6 per 8-to-10 hour day, on the basis of a 5½-to-6-day week. From these figures, it is not difficult to see the disastrous effect that conditions in the unorganized field have upon actual union standards.

Additional factors that make enforcement of union conditions possible only by means of the strictest union vigilance are: 1. The tremendous unemployment which—with its concomitant misery and desperation—makes for the keenest sort of competition for the available jobs; 2. The very short season in the trade, accentuated by unemployment, reducing the yearly income of the worker who must find other jobs at any price to supplement it; 3. Close contact with the employer, because of the smallness of the shops, fostering rivalry between the workers for the favor of the boss during the slack season—a condition in which the "kick-back" flourishes.

Speed-Up Aggravated

The recession which is, of course, a basic problem for workers in general, is further aggravated for the painters by the human speed-up which increases in the industry as the crisis deepens. The mad scramble for profits and the indifference of the union leadership has resulted in a complete disregard for the health and safety of the painter on the job.

Among the many technological changes that have taken place in the trade, such as the introduction of new materials processed in the factory, patent products, etc., all of which multiply over and over again the hardship of unemployment, the most dangerous of all is the employment of the spray-gun. The use of the spray-gun not only reduces considerably the labor time required, but calls for practically no skill and moreover, constitutes a tremendous new health hazard in a notoriously hazardous trade. This serious threat to the very existence of the painters and especially, to union standards, has to date met only with a lax, do-nothing attitude on the part of the union leadership.

Job Competition

Among the union bosses, there is cut-throat competition on practically all jobs. The difference between the high bid and the low bid varies tremendously. Many factors enter into the bid-

ding, but the determining factor is the wages paid in the shop. Other factors are chiseling on the specifications such as applying two coats of paint where three are called for, the possibility of bribing agents, petty graft, political pull, etc. The boss therefore selects from the painters who come into his employment those who are willing to work at less than union conditions as a pliable, permanent nucleus for his shop.

These conditions created a body of men who, while members of the union, are forced by economic pressure to be dependent upon the "good will" of the boss. The failure on the part of the union administration to concern itself seriously with the question of protection for the man on the job brings about the following situation: the painter who is most union-conscious, most insistent that union standards be maintained, finds himself at the mercy of the more backward elements.

The influx into the trade during the depression of a great number of new men, some of whom have joined the union, and whose knowledge of the trade is limited, confronts the union with new problems. The bosses naturally attempt to use this influx as a labor reserve for the purpose of lowering wages in general. They stress the inadequate skill of the new men in order to club them into acceptance of sub-union standards, and not without effect.

Favoritism Practiced

The backward elements and a good section of the newer union men, who have many potential militants among them, not only seek the favor of the boss, but find it necessary to seek the favor of the union administration as well. How the Stalinist machine in control of the union, deliberately fosters violations by the bosses of the agreement, corrupting the newer union men through favoritism and vicious practices, on the one hand, and strengthening the reactionary, disintegrating tendencies, on the other hand—that will be dealt with in detail in articles to follow.

An examination of the record of the Stalinist administration in the union and of the background on which it has arisen will reveal why the first step for the painters in solving their great difficulties is the removal of this scourge from its dominant position in the District Council of the Brotherhood.

YPSL Committees Will Slug It Out

What promises to be the battle royal of the imperialist epoch will take place this Sunday, May 8, at Tibbets Brook, when the Y.P.S.L. National Committee locks horns with the District Committee in a hot and heating game of indoor baseball.
 For the National Committee:

S.W.P. Labor Secretary Gives Account of Tour

By B. J. WIDICK
 Labor Secretary, S.W.P.

Traveling through the main industrial centers of America during the past two months, when the Hitler seizure of Austria, the third Moscow trial and the acute economic crisis weighed heavily on the minds of the people, we were afforded an excellent opportunity to study the reaction to these significant events.

In the New England area with its many "ghost towns," the main topic of conversation with union leaders was the critical situation in the newly-formed C. I. O. unions. The hammer blows of the depression, combined with the inexperience of the unionists, was creating havoc in the unions. Many were falling apart. Wage cuts, lay-offs and the miseries of unemployment and insecurity were facing most of the industrial workers, six years after they had backed Roosevelt and the New Deal as the hope of their salvation.

Attitude To Trials

A little incident in Philadelphia illustrated the reaction of the American workers to the third Moscow trial. Two workers were talking about Krestinsky's repudiation of his confession and his subsequent retraction the next day.

"Hell, what else would you expect after the guy spent another night in Stalin's jail. You'd talk plenty, too," one of the workers said. Skepticism was prevalent everywhere, but little real interest was found. The workers were too occupied with their own pressing economic problems to worry much about another trial.

The political situation in Pennsylvania, complicated by the C.I.O.-A.F. of L. fight, has one amusing aspect, a railroad porter told the writer. "Last summer Governor Earle was our leader, and now we are supposed to vote against him," he said. It was treason to the C.I.O. to criticize Earle's strike-breaking actions in the Bethlehem strike a year ago. Now it is treason if you praise him.

Fight for Existence

The depths of the present crisis reflect themselves in the contrast between the state of the C.I.O. union movement of one year ago and today in the Ohio region. In those earlier days the name C.I.O. sounded invincible. The spirit of the workers soared sky-high. Today the unions are having a grim fight for existence. The defeat of the Little Steel strike and the mass lay-offs in the Mahoning valley steel region have been heavy blows. In Salem, Ohio, one steel lodge has maintained its strength. Its leadership is militant and progressive. It is free from Stalinist influence.

In Akron the impression is gained that another Goodyear strike is on. Headlines scream of the dispute between the United Rubber Workers and the companies. The radio is filled with pro or anti-union speeches. Feeling is as tense as during the critical moments of the Goodyear strike. The class struggle rages furiously.

Goodrich threatens to abolish 5,000 jobs unless wage cuts are accepted. Businessmen demand that the unions take the cuts. The rubber workers stand pat. The bosses cannot understand why all the anti-union propaganda has not smashed the U.R.W.A. Unless one has been through the strike and sit-down struggles, it is impossible to know how unionism has been burned into the souls of the gumminers in the fires of picket lines.

Workers' Control Needed

The rubber workers want jobs, decent wages, and security. The industry is only operating at 30 per cent. If it were running full blast, thousands would still be unemployed because of technological advances. Unions alone cannot solve the problems. There is but one answer to the rubber workers' problems and most people are afraid to mention it: Workers' control of production.

In Akron as in Lynn and other branches where the party's main orientation is the trade union movement, one finds a different spirit among the comrades. They are working hard, they feel the

Drip Draper, Stinky Stiler, Droopy Demby, Swede Erber, Mugsy Krack, Gaby Gould, Oh Barb, Popeye Palla, Gugu Garrett.

For the District Committee: Red White, Boopus Miller, Toots Jager, Stretch Forster, Yappy Mason, Milk Bottle, Rip Rader, Hebe Herman, and Label Becker.

Meet 10 A. M. at Woodlawn I.R.T. station. If weather is wet, save rainchecks. No rebates.

class struggle in their day to day activities, they drive forward despite many obstacles. They are confident of the future.

Republic Steel opened a new plant in Cleveland the week we were there; 2,000 men will do the work of 16,000 and the steel will be of a higher quality in this modern factory. This example illustrates the entire problem of technological unemployment facing the union movement.

Characteristics of Detroit

Detroit is the center of three things today: the auto industry, the largest number of unemployed industrial workers in proportion to population, and the most ambitious program of the Stalinist party in America. The C.P. is concentrating its leading forces here in an effort to rule or ruin the United Automobile Workers of America. That leading red-baiter, Richard Frankenstein, first vice-president, is their candidate in the battle against Homer Martin, whose blast against the C.P. pro-war line has had a telling effect in the ranks of the auto workers.

Our party contains some very fine auto union militants. It has a great task ahead in this C.I.O. center. The comrades are working hard to overcome numerical weakness. In Detroit, hundreds and not tens are necessary to give the working class powerful leadership.

It was a pleasure to see "new" faces at the anti-war meetings the branches held in the middle-west. A young rubber worker joined the Y.P.S.L. in Akron after the rally. Some auto workers attended the Cleveland meeting. A Stalinist militant listened attentively at the Toledo meeting.

Stalinists Applaud

Sixty steel workers came to the Indiana Harbor anti-war gathering. Plenty of rank-and-file Stalinists were in the audience. The C.P. organizer took the floor. It was an exciting evening. The C.P. members applauded our attacks on the C.P. line!

The entire area around Chicago, heart of industrial America, presented a tragic picture of the plight of workers under capitalism. We went to the scene of the "Little Steel" strike massacre. One of our comrades still suffers from wounds sustained in leading the workers' defense. The union never recovered from the defeat in that strike. Mass lay-offs were another blow. While the finest industrial plants in the world waste away, hundreds of thousands of workers exist in misery resulting from unemployment. The S.W.P. has its roots in a strong shop committee at a large plant. A young proletarian branch is active at Indiana Harbor.

The Stalinists in the United Electrical and Radio Workers in the Chicago region are having a tough time these days. Two locals adopted the anti-war resolution of the Minneapolis Central Labor Union. Young Chicago comrades are doing a good job there.

In Minneapolis

Minneapolis seemed different than the rest of the country. It is an exception. The Stalinists are conspicuous by their absence from the main stream of the labor movement. The unions are still on the march, while elsewhere in the country the unions are at best in strategic retreat. Watch Minneapolis for hot developments when many union contracts come up for renewal next month. The St. Paul branch did a real job in the recent primary and is an up-and-comer in party circles.

How did the workers and other people react to Hitler's Austrian coup? We watched them read the newspapers intently at the factory gates before ringing the clock card. In movie houses, dead silence except for our boo was maintained as newsreels showed the Nazi seizure. The nightmare of another world war loomed before them. Pacifism and isolationism are very strong, conversations with union militants revealed everywhere, in the Middle West.

While it is a bit early in the middle-west for political campaigning, Labor's Non-Fascist League has ambitious plans in Ohio and Michigan for the fall elections. The League is packed with Stalinists who fight viciously every attempt towards independent working-class political action. Advocacy of that slogan becomes "Trotskyism."

Our conclusion from the tour was a simple one: Even greater emphasis on and attention to the immediate problems of the American workers and concentration on activity within the unions will help build our party along proletarian lines.

Rubber Union Considers New NLRB Project

AKRON—Most of the points in the proposed arbitration plan for the rubber industry advanced recently by James P. Miller, regional director of the National Labor Relations Board, have now become a subject of negotiations between the Goodrich Tire and Rubber Company and the Akron local of the United Rubber Workers of America.
 By far the most significant of the proposals is the one regard-

ing the arbitration board. In Miller's lengthy document much space is used to show how "democratic" such a board would be. For example: "There have been various attempts made in the past to establish such tribunals. Some have been most effective while others failed because they were wholly or in part sustained by some benevolent sponsor. Such tribunals could not function impartially because they became subsidized entities, or were so limited in scope they lost their forcefulness."
 This board, subsidized by workers (not by union) and

the employers, would consist of three men, who would hold office for five years. Besides a labor and a boss representative on the board, the third man would be chosen by the other two. As one militant unionist said, "the destinies of the rubber workers would be finally decided by this third man—a non-union man, and his decision would be binding, as the proposal indicates."
 Moreover, even "individual workers" and the employers would have the right to appeal to the board, not to mention "independent unionists." No strike could be conducted pending the board's decision.