

## Socialist Appeal

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## The Wages and Hours Bill

The victory of the Roosevelt yes-man, Claude Pepper, in the Florida primaries, has suddenly reminded large numbers of Congressmen of their social consciences. The reminder becomes especially poignant when the Congressmen contemplate the billions of dollars which the new Relief Bill will give the President for irrigation purposes in next autumn's electoral fields.

Three days after Pepper's triumph, hundreds of Representatives nearly trampled each other to death in their scramble to sign a petition to lift the Wages and Hours Bill out of the asphyxiated chamber of the Rules Committee, where it was being painlessly suffocated, and on to the floor of the House.

The Bill has now a fair chance of passing, though its opponents in the Senate plan delays which might prevent completion at this Session.

Whether or not it will go through depends in large measure on the strength of the pressure brought by labor to demand favorable action.

All sections of the labor movement do, and must, support the Bill. Inadequate as it may be, if it improves conditions in even a single sweat-shop, if it stimulates even one move to wipe out sub-union standards, it will be that much to the good.

It would, however, be either a profound mistake or shameless hypocrisy to maintain that this present Bill is a model of its kind, or that any legislative measure can solve the problem of guaranteeing economic security for the workers. We leave such apologetics to the Stalinist union-busters and the other Roosevelt press-agents.

The present Bill provides, nominally, for a twenty-five cents an hour minimum wage and a forty-four hour maximum week, to be modified over a period of three years to a forty-cents an hour wage, forty-hour week. But even these miserable provisions apply to only a minority of workers. Only industries related to "interstate commerce" are affected. Dozens of fields—agriculture, fishing, domestic service, etc.—are specifically excepted; and general authority is granted to suspend the application of the Bill in the light of "specific circumstances."

An \$11.00 a week minimum, when the Government's own experts say that \$1500 to \$1600 a year (about \$30 a week) is the minimum wage to make possible health, let alone comfort and decent living; and when the most competent technicians estimate that the United States productive plant can today—even without improvement—provide a general minimum

income equivalent to from \$4,000 to \$5,000 a year to every family!

The present Bill makes no provision for the unemployed; and a forty-four hour week is not going to be such a great blessing to the millions of workers on ten to twenty hours part-time.

When a starving man gets a crust, it is sensible for him to eat it; but his aim should be to get a full meal—particularly when the table is loaded with food.

Let us take this Bill, put it under our belts, and then go on toward a real Wages and Hours standard.

The kind of Wages and Hours Bill which labor should demand in this country should include at the very least the following features:

1. It would apply to all industries and occupations without exception.

2. Its minimum must be at least as high as the Government estimates of a minimum adequate living wage: \$30 a week.

3. Its maximum hours provision must be low enough to give jobs to all those displaced by technological advance: 30 hours per week.

4. If it is actually to aid in maintaining and raising the standard of living of the masses, the minimum wage must apply to all workers over the entire 52 weeks of the year, whether they are employed, unemployed, or employed part-time. Supplementary relief to bring weekly income up at least to the minimum should operate automatically and immediately whenever regular employment slows up or stops. Only in this way will the bosses and not the workers carry the burden of unemployment; and only in this way will a wages and hours bill actually protect the standard of living of the workers.

There is nothing either "unreasonable" or utopian in these demands. They are in fact extremely modest when compared with this country's resources.

If U. S. labor fights for provisions of this kind, and fights not primarily through its fair-weather "friends" in Congress and the White House but above all through its own direct organized strength and its own class actions, it will find itself no longer giving thanks for the crumbs, but getting its teeth into the meat course.

## Untouchables

The new constitution of the Communist Party, U.S.A., which is to be adopted unanimously at the forthcoming convention of that organization, provides that no party member shall have personal or political relationships with Trotskyists, Lovestoneites or "other known enemies of the party and the working class."

We can understand the disquietude of the Stalinist chieftains. They have been losing those members whom the monolithic party regime has not succeeded in shielding from "dangerous thoughts" provoked by the Moscow trials and the party's political renegacy.

But what a confession of bankruptcy—to write into the party constitution a decree quarantining the followers of Earl Browder against outside ideological influences!

The new constitution also provides that only American citizens, or those who have declared their intention of becoming citizens, shall be eligible for party membership. Next we may hear that only Aryans—or those who have declared their intention of becoming Aryans—will be admitted to this party of has-been internationalists.

## "Preparing the Shot!"



Without apology, we reproduce this cartoon from the "Daily Worker" of three years ago. Readers of that Stalinist sheet will note that then, in contrast to the present, proclamation of Roosevelt's "peaceful" role was regarded by the Communist Party as grist to the imperialist war mill. It is not Roosevelt who has changed!

## One In Six Depend On Relief, Says Hopkins

By DAVID COWLES

Harry L. Hopkins, Works Progress Administrator, testified recently before a House Appropriations sub-committee that six million families in the United States are dependent on some form of public relief. These families comprise 20,000,000 persons and make up one-sixth of the whole population. They are doomed to unemployment and poverty so long as capitalism continues. According to the New York Post "Hopkins said he believed the present economic system could never entirely correct the unemployment situation."

The number of unemployed is already unbearably large. The W.P.A. alone is giving work relief to 2,600,000 now. But due to "the present economic system" unemployment is increasing so rapidly that, according to Hopkins, the number of W.P.A. jobs will have to be increased to at least 3,100,000 in the coming winter. He estimated that the Federal government would have to spend \$3,000,000,000 for its share of the year's relief expenditures.

### Drop In The Bucket

This sum barely scratches the surface of the needs of the unemployed. And so long as "the present economic system" continues, the plight of the unemployed will grow increasingly worse. This is because the workers can have wages, and the purchasing power which wages gives them, only if they are needed in production. However, American capitalism is declining, its production is declining, and it is throwing workers into unemployment. Moreover, to keep up profits, capitalism introduces more efficient machinery, and this throws even more workers out of work. In addition, each year a half million youths come out of school and look for employment in industry. The three sources combine to create a large and ever-growing army of unemployed.

The relief appropriation for the unemployed will not solve their problem nor save the status quo. It is not intended to do the first and it cannot do the second. By Hopkins' own admission, the W.P.A. funds alone "will not by any means provide the total increase in private employment which is essential." Private industry must be depended upon to give jobs. But private industry cannot give jobs. On the contrary, it is declining sharply, its profits are falling, and it is passing on the burden of its bankruptcy to the workers by cutting, not increasing, employment; by cutting, not increasing, wages; and by increasing speed-up. The alternatives face the workers

with increasing clarity: either poverty and demoralization under "the present economic system" or a struggle for a new economic system that will ensure a decent livelihood and will permit human dignity.

### Problem Intensified

The numbers who face these alternatives grow as economic activity slumps down and unemployment goes up. At the peak of economic activity in 1937, there were still 9,000,000 whom private industry could not employ. The current depression has increased their number by more than 5,000,000. Hundreds of thousands of tenant farmers who have been expropriated from agriculture join millions of industrial workers who have been disinherited from production. Most of them depend upon government relief for a part of their livelihood if not all of it.

Their struggle for government aid has deep revolutionary significance. If the aid is not given, their inability to live within the framework of "the present economic system" becomes vivid with the pangs of starvation and real with all the reality of death. Their struggle becomes not only a struggle against the government which refuses to help them live, but also a struggle against "the present economic system" which dooms them to poverty, demoralization and death.

### Will Cut Relief

If aid is given, it still does not ensure the permanence of the status quo. For the aid must be given in increasing amounts because of the increasing unemployment. If the relief appropriations are not increased, the government will resort to cutting the relief that each unemployed person gets, to stopping the distribution of clothes, and to inventing all sorts of schemes that will spread the misery. These actions will drive the unemployed to sit-ins and struggles against the relief administration.

If the aid is given in increasing amounts, it will still not allay the growing discontent. The government pays relief to the unemployed by taking the money from the workers in the form of sales taxes, etc., and from the middle class in the form of higher income taxes. It makes only half-hearted gestures to tax the monopoly capitalists. At the same time, the relief appropriations cannot keep up with the rapidly mounting unemployment.

### Menace of Fascism

These conditions show that the United States is in transition. The workers and middle class are discontented because increasing taxes cut their purchasing power. The unemployed are discontented because their relief is inadequate for a decent living and because permanent unemployment stares them in the face. The big capitalists are discontented because they fear the half-hearted gestures at making them pay higher taxes may become a reality. Therefore, they fight continuously to cut down relief to the unemployed, on the one hand, and on the other to pass on to workers and middle class the cost of the decline of capitalism. To control the discontent which may burst out at any time against "the present economic system," which they control, they prepare to introduce an efficient machine for suppressing the unemployed and the workers. This machine is called fascism.

The actions of the unemployed who want to fight fascism must be: (1) Strengthening the unemployed movement for more jobs and greater relief; (2) maintaining the Workers Alliance as a militant, independent union of unemployed, free from the control of the bosses, the LaGuardia or Roosevelt Administration; (3) emphasizing the fighting unity of the unemployed with the employed workers and tenant farmers; (4) assimilating the truth spoken by Hopkins before the House Appropriations sub-committee: "The present economic system" cannot solve the problems of the unemployed. Socialism alone can solve permanently the problems of unemployment.

## U.S. Imperialism Shows Aerial Might Over N. Y.

(Continued from page 1)

plot the masses of China. It is against this war that the workers of America must prepare—in their own way. Not by supporting the war-making criminals of imperialism through support to the principle of "collective security," but by their own independent class action which alone can frustrate the

navy is absent engaged in a Pacific war... The word "absent" here assuredly means absent far out over the Pacific, engaged in war with Japan. War for what? War to decide which of the imperialist robbers shall enslave and ex-war plans of imperialism.

## On Housing

An Editorial

The housing situation in the United States is a running sore and no serious measures are being taken to cure it.

Let us look at some of the startling figures:

Two weeks ago the United States Public Health Service estimated that about *three million* (3,000,000) urban families have fewer rooms in their homes than there are persons. That is, families of three persons that live in two-room houses or flats; families of five persons that live in four-room or even three-room houses. One million live in dwellings with more than one and one-half times as many persons as there are rooms and 700,000 live in dwellings with at least twice as many persons as there are rooms.

And naturally, as is the custom in our great Democracy, the Negro families, both in the North and in the South, live under the worst conditions.

### 6,000,000 Homes Are Needed

Last November, Roosevelt in his message to Congress said that from 600,000 to 800,000 dwelling units a year would be needed for the next five years.

The American Public Health Association, however, estimated that there is a need *now* of 6,000,000 new homes, and it emphasized that they must be of low cost.

Even the more modest figures of the conservative Brookings Institution say that there is a need of 4,500,000 houses by 1941, or 1,125,000 a year, while the National Housing Commission raises the figure to 1,503,000 a year for the next two years.

In New York City, which only reflects conditions throughout the country, there are more than half a million families living in 64,000 condemned, fire-trap tenements. Flames took a death-toll of 33 persons in these traps in one year; 19 others died under the debris of fallen structures; the annual disease toll is beyond estimate.

### New York's Needs

Last month, Commissioner of Housing and Building, Alfred Rheinstein, told the City Council Committee that about one billion dollars would be needed to make a substantial improvement in slum elimination and the construction of new low-cost housing.

Former City Housing Authority chairman, Langdon W. Post said that figure was too modest by half—two billion dollars are required at the least. And this for New York City alone!

What is being done about this situation?

Within the past four years the government has provided only 2,318 low-rent dwellings in New York. The immediate need is for 500,000!

The new government plans are no great improvement. Under the Wagner-Stegall housing act, only 5,000 additional low-rent apartments will be built within the next 3-4 years—a drop in the bucket.

And bear in mind what Mayor LaGuardia has pointed out and what was pretty well known without him: The absolute top rent for the slum dwellers is \$30 a month; and eighty percent of them can afford to pay only \$20 or under.

The latest housing bill put through by the Roosevelt New Deal is not, properly speaking, a house-building bill. It is a financing bill. It provides that a government corporation shall guarantee new mortgages on homes and apartments, under certain conditions. It is a boon to the banks for the credit they extend on housing—for it guarantees their loans.

Moreover, the bulk of the homes and apartment buildings erected under this bill, where they are not jerry-built, inadequate; ill-planned, are beyond the reach of the vast majority of the home-needing, slum-dwelling, high-rent-paying workers.

### For A Real Housing Program

The only serious step that will bring us close to a solution of the scandalous housing problem is a truly large-scale government building program. It must be based on three points: sound construction, low rents, and the payment of union wages to building workers. An *absolute minimum*, making possible a serious beginning, is for Congress to vote a Five-Billion-Dollar Housing program—with the five billion really to go towards building houses!

Where is the money to come from?

Why, from the plutocrats, of course!

The Treasury Department report of tax returns received up to the end of August 1937, shows that 61 individuals admitted taxable net incomes, after all conceivable deductions, of one million dollars (\$1,000,000) or more in 1936. As against the 40,000,000 American people who live in slums there are 18,196 persons in the United States who reported a total net income for 1936 of almost *two billion* dollars (\$1,875,783,000).

These are the incomes of the individual plutocrats. They do not include the deductions which clever lawyers fix up for them. They do not include income from tax-exempt securities. They do not include, above all, the huge "earnings" of wealthy corporations.

Five billion dollars for housing would be a good beginning. It can easily be obtained. Roosevelt, Ickes, Jackson—all the New Dealers—talk about the "economic royalists." Good! But how about putting the squeeze on these plutocrats? How about making them disgorge a small percentage of their fabulous profits for housing the slum-dwellers of America? How about some *Action*, instead of Fireside Chats, instead of words?

### NEXT WEEK

ERNEST ERBER Will Review  
FELIX MORROW'S  
REVOLUTION AND COUNTER-REVOLUTION  
IN SPAIN  
Just Off The Press  
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## On The Ludlow Amendment

### Statement of the National Committee, SWP

After discussing the Ludlow Amendment, and the policy adopted toward it by the Political Committee, the April session of the National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party came to the following conclusion:

Though the Political Committee and the party press were correct in combatting the pacifist illusions engendered by the sponsors of the Ludlow Amendment and the treacherous distinction between wars of "aggression" and "defense" embodied in the Amendment, they failed to estimate rightly the genuinely progressive character of the popular response to the project of a referendum on war, a response based upon the legitimate distrust which the masses feel toward the bourgeois government, their unwillingness to fight without protest in the threatening imperialist war, and their desire for democratic control of their own destiny.

From this failure, the Political Committee drew the incorrect tactical conclusion of a negative position with respect to the Amendment itself and the general project of a popular referendum on war. Such a negative position isolates the party from the progressive mass movement aroused by the project, and tends to sterilize its active struggle against imperialism.

The party and its press must therefore alter

their line on this question. They must become the most militant advocates of a popular referendum on war. They must seek to have labor everywhere demand that the amendment be formulated to provide for a popular referendum on the undertaking of any war, be it allegedly "defensive" or "aggressive," and that all citizens from the age of 18 upward, since from that age they are liable to military service, have the right to vote in the referendum.

They must take no responsibility for the pacifist illusions fostered in connection with the amendment and in particular must continue to expose the bourgeois politicians, including Ludlow, LaFollette and Co. themselves, who seek to exploit the honest anti-war sentiment of the masses by introducing a bill in Congress and then either dropping any serious fight for it or so diluting and circumscribing it as to nullify the will and longings of the masses. They must endeavor to extend the struggle beyond the confines of purely parliamentary debate, so that workers' pressure may be brought into play by means of organized mass action. In this way, the party will not only be able to correct its tactical error, but also to deepen and solidify its connections with the genuine and progressive movement of the masses.