

The Negro Question

by Robert L. Birchman

"Fifth Column" Bunk Is A Menace to Colored People

Much of the talk about "fifth column" activities will be directed against the black workers. This is evident from the statement of Lieutenant Lawrence A. Oxley, in a speech to the Metropolitan Chicago Conference on Employment Problems of the Negro, that because of their poverty and discontent, Negroes "may easily become the nucleus of 'fifth column' maneuverings in Chicago." An editorial in the Negro paper, the California Eagle, May 16, answers the lieutenant and his kind. It says:

"A bill was introduced in the California legislature to outlaw all 'Fifth Column' organizations—Fascist and Communist—which are 'treasonably' working for the destruction of 'American principles.'"

"Here we have all the three major developments which presage all war crises: (1) hysterical military expansion; (2) minimizing of domestic problems; (3) accusations of treason. They compose a vicious trio which react venomously upon the average citizen. He is propagandized into a war he does not understand, probably in a foreign nation; domestic problems confronting himself and his family are ignored; and his right to protest is denied under the charge of 'treason.'"

"Those powers which are opposed to the spreading of social, liberal legislation—the anti-lynch bill, the anti-poll tax bill—are anxious to see the nation involved in foreign war. Manufacturers of munitions are anxious to realize the profits of such a war. And the present political machine is anxious to remain in power and will do it through a foreign war."

"There is not a single American defender of democracy who doesn't have his hands full right here in the U.S.A. We can spare no volunteers to protect Mr. Roosevelt's 'human rights' in Europe or Asia."

It is an encouraging fact that many Negro papers understand that propaganda about the "fifth column" is a drive against the labor movement, for the suppression of all civil rights and will be directed against the colored people as well.

Danger to West Indians

Most endangered will be the thousands of colored people from the West Indies. An item in the Pittsburgh Courier, June 1, from Miami, Florida, states:

"Allegedly seeking to halt 'Fifth Column' activities in the city, the Miami city commissioners asked the law department to draft an ordinance ordering the registration and finger-printing of all aliens in Miami." Similar ordinances have been passed or are under consideration in other neighboring cities.

"Several Negro domestics were stopped recently by American Legionnaires and questioned on their citizenship status. Other legionnaires have been quietly urging the firing of all foreign born workers in local institutions."

Black Man O.K.—For Cannon Fodder

"It appears to us that the American black man is 'worth his weight in gold' when the war drums begin to echo," writes Lucius C. Harper, in his column "Dustin' off the News," in the Chicago Defender, June 1. How true this is today in France.

Tens of thousands of African troops have already been mowed down—sacrificed to "democracy." With a total of nearly 500,000 black troops already mobilized and on the battle fields of France, another million are being recruited to be thrown into the path of the giant Nazi war machine. The Chicago Defender bitterly captions a picture, portraying a recruiting camp in Africa: "Robust Youth Today—Tomorrow, Europe's Cannon Fodder."

The Negroes in America are today being discriminated against in the armed forces of the nation, but once the war starts, the government will forget the color line and the black man will have the opportunity—by forcible conscription—to sacrifice his life for "democracy."

At home, and behind the lines, of course, the color line will still prevail—and be knocked into every returning black soldier after the war! The black man's "equality" will extend only to his "right" to die for the white Democracy.

Scabbing No Answer to Jim Crow

The attitude of Joseph Jefferson, head of the Negro Labor Relations League of Chicago, toward the recent strike of milk drivers must be condemned. Jefferson urged Negroes to apply to struck dairies for jobs, stating: "I believe in unions, but the Negro is not bound to honor a picket line or cooperate in a strike conducted by a jim-crow union which denies the Negro a chance to work. If the dairies will assure Negroes of permanent jobs, I can see that they get men enough to deliver any amount of milk they want delivered."

While it is true that the union was late in changing its policy of discrimination—the previous union officials were recently ousted in an election—the actions of the colored drivers at the Lakeview Dairy in refusing to sign up in the union after being invited to do so, can only be most injurious to the interests of the colored drivers.

As we have stated on previous occasions, colored workers cannot combat a policy of discrimination on the part of any union by permitting themselves to be recruited as strike-breakers. By bringing organized pressure against the jim-crow policies of any union, colored workers can and are winning their rightful place in the unions.

War Deal Begins Putting Screws on Labor

Walsh-Healey Act Spiked By Congress

(Continued from Page 1)

"symbol of our national unity," even though thereby, in Justice Stone's words, the law "coerces these children to express a sentiment which they do not entertain and which violates their deepest religious convictions." It is noteworthy that, in making this ruling, the court overruled the two lower courts which had heard the case. Two children, members of the pacifist religious sect known as Jehovah's Witnesses, who asserted that the salute violated their religious tenets, had been expelled from school by a Pennsylvania school board; they sought an injunction against the school board and secured it from the Federal District Court; the school board appealed to the Third Circuit Court of Appeals which, however, upheld the children's side.

What It Means

In one suggestive sentence the court indicated that it was stepping aside and would waive any judgment on any and all acts undertaken in the name of patriotism by the states and the other Federal branches of the government. It said:

"The wisdom of training children in patriotic impulses by those compulsions which necessarily pervade so much of the educational process is not for our (the court's) independent judgment."

Just generalize on that little sentence—and anything goes!

UAW Leaders Make Futile Plea to FDR

(Continued from Page 1)

The UAW negotiating committee, and their "teachers and inspirers" Murray, Hillman and Lewis, has been demonstrated in the past month to be nothing but a policy of futility, defeatism and retreat. Instead of attempting to convince GM of the militancy and the power of the union and its membership, they proceeded to convince GM of its respectability. With what results? GM slapped them in the face and proceeded to offer a contract it would not have dared propose in 1937.

Now to cap the climax the auto leadership calls upon Roosevelt to intervene! The same Roosevelt who said "A plague on both your houses" when the steel workers asked him to intervene in their fight with Tom Girdler, the same Roosevelt who condoned the Memorial Day massacre in Chicago, the same Roosevelt who calls in Stettinius and Knudsen, U.S. Steel and GM, Morgan and DuPont, to head the drive for "national defense."

In the name of "national defense" the CIO shipyard workers striking at the Federal Shipbuilding and Drydock Company, have been sold down the river by their top union officials and forced to return to work on the company's terms. Their president stated that this sell-out was necessary "to avoid charges of obstructing the national defense program." In the future anybody guilty of asking a nickel increase while the corporations are squeezing out millions of dollars of war profits will be called a "fifth columnist" and charged with obstructing the program of national defense.

Up to the Workers

It is up to the GM workers, the most militant group of men of the most militant union in this country, to cut through all this red tape, phoney statesmanship, and sugar-coated union busting program. It is up to them to take the lead again in pushing the automobile workers in this country towards their goal of economic security. This can be done by the same tactics and the same policy that won the great GM strike of 1937. No reliance on phony politicians, no reliance on false friends of labor, no reliance on chicken-hearted, cowardly top union officials. Reliance only on the union itself, and its strength and the militancy of its membership.

It was a militantly fought strike in 1937 that finally convinced the auto barons that the auto union was here to stay. It may be necessary to conduct another militant strike in 1940 to convince the same auto barons that the auto union is determined to survive and to go forward.

Behind the Lines

"Daily News" Heralds Coming Shift in U.S. Policy Toward Japan

by GEORGE STERN

A government cannot shift one of its key policies as fast as a newspaper can. But when important newspapers make such shifts it can be taken as an almost certain indication of the way the wind is blowing.

For ten years the bluntest partisan of an aggressive anti-Japanese policy by the U.S. has been the New York Daily News, largest-circulating paper in the country. Especially since 1937 the paper has been demanding an embargo against Japan and a long-range blockade backed up by the navy. Its famous slogan "Two ships for one" closed every Monday morning editorial warning the government that Japan and the Pacific, not Germany and Europe were the main concerns of Yankee imperialism.

Last Monday morning the News came out suddenly for a policy of "appeasement" with respect to Japan to checkmate the creation of a Berlin-Tokio axis directed against the U.S. after a German victory in Europe.

The News quotes the Chicago Tribune, paper owned by the influential Republican leader Col. Knox, as urging a policy designed to convert Japan from a potential enemy into a friend by letting it have its way in China and, if need be, in the Dutch East Indies.

"The United States may be able to help China more effectively by being polite to Japan than by persistently hurling threats and moral reproaches at Japan," the News said with characteristic cynicism. "If we keep on reproving Japan for what it is trying to do to China and keep on threatening a breakoff of trade with Japan, we may drive Japan into the German-Italian camp. That would make Japan more dangerous to us than it now is. If Hitler should win the war, and especially if he should grab the British Navy . . . we

might easily find ourselves menaced with urgent trouble in the Atlantic and the Pacific at the same time. We can avert this by making friends with Japan . . ."

In effect, as the News went on to explain the next day, the U. S. has to try to be as Machiavellian as Germany and to avoid the "stumblebum diplomacy" displayed by Britain in the period preceding the outbreak of war. "Diplomacy is preparation for war," the News said, and the idea is to proceed along that line without continuing a policy that can no longer be backed up with arms.

As the News said, it is a question of being "realistic." It is plain that the most serious observers in Washington have calculations on an Allied defeat in Europe. In their column on June 4, Pearson and Allen wrote that "a careful study of confidential war bulletins received by the Army and Navy gives no grounds for . . . optimism. In the bluntest language, it will take a military miracle to prevent overwhelming German victory, including occupation of London. And miracles in modern warfare occur on the side with the most tanks and planes."

Once this fact is accepted as the axis of American war policy, a total shift in strategy is to be expected. Organization of hemisphere defense means that the U.S. will embark on a lengthy and vast rearmament program, will descend with a heavy hand on all of Latin America, will probably seize or "take over" all foreign-owned bases and base sites—Greenland, Bermuda, the Dutch, French, and British West Indies—and will probably extract "grants" of base rights from Brazil and other Central and South American countries.

An unavoidable corollary of this policy is abandonment of

GPU Assassins Still At Large in Mexico

The GPU gunmen who tried to murder Leon and Nathalia Trotsky on May 24 in Coyoacan, Mexico, are still at large.

To judge from press reports here, the Mexican police have been led off on a series of dodges which got them nowhere near the real perpetrators of the crime.

Hart Feared Dead

Sheldon Hart, young American secretary to Trotsky who was kidnapped by the would-be assassins, was gone without a trace. Trotsky told pressmen he had no reason not to have full confidence in young Hart whose life, he feared, was forfeit.

Trotsky was quoted as declaring that the men who tried to murder him were being sheltered by protectors in high places. He cited the role played by Lombardo Toledano, head of the CTM (Mexican Trade Union Confederation), in playing the role of public spokesman for the GPU in Mexico. He also did not exclude the possibility that the Gestapo, working with the GPU, had a hand in the attack.

Police Moves Absurd

This notion was so patently absurd that the police had to drop it after a few days. Rivera, once a political friend of Trotsky's and now an opponent, was not himself arrested. In a press interview, Trotsky characterized the suspicion against the painter as fantastic and stupid.

Later last week, police arrested two of Trotsky's secretaries and two other men who had come to the Trotsky household after the attack to offer friendly help. But this bit of shadow boxing also had to be stopped after a day. The two secretaries, in whom Trotsky publicly declared his complete confidence, were released. The fate of the other two was not reported.

Three Stalinist Ailbs!

Here in New York, the Stalinist press has already produced three separate and mutually contradictory versions of the attempt on Trotsky's life.

The day after it occurred, the Daily Worker said Trotsky had tried to stage his own assassination, for mysterious purposes known only to the Stalinist editors.

When that didn't go down, they tried the idea that Mexican reactionaries and agents of American imperialism had pulled off the attack to help provoke American intervention in Mexico.

The final and crowning theory, advanced by the Stalinist Freiheit, was that Diego Rivera had tried to kill Trotsky because the 61-year old Bolshevik exile came between the painter and his wife!

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his own bedroom. Just what, he asked, could Trotsky expect to gain from staging an attempt on his own life? What Stalin had to gain, on the other hand, was plain enough.

A few days after the attempted assassination, police descended upon the home of Diego Rivera, the Mexican painter, and arrested his chauffeur and seized a station wagon. The latter, it was dardly hinted, played some role in the attack on Trotsky's home.

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In letters to police authorities, Trotsky openly charged that the GPU was responsible for the attack on his life. He branded as patently ridiculous the attempt of the Stalinists to make the charge that Trotsky himself had actually staged the machine-gunning of

Asia to Japan. This is what the News foreshadows. In the diplomatic preparation for war, we can now expect a wide tack in American policy toward Japan. And Japan, we may be sure, will not be long in taking full advantage of it.

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"Youth Are Not Interested in Politics," . . .

by HARRY FRANKEL

In a recent forum, one political spokesman for the capitalist class emphasized the fact that the youth do not seem to be attracted to "politics." By "politics" he meant the grime and filth of the American two party system. The months and years to come will prove that this speaker understands very little of either the youth or politics. His mistake is that he tries to limit the choice of the youth to his own dirty pig pen. But no such limitation is possible. The deepening of the world crisis will attract the youth more and more to the politics of the working class.

For eleven years the youth of America has served as the pitiful and patient whipping boy for American capitalism. The worst sweat work, the most uncertain jobs, the odds and ends, the scraps and leavings from the meager table of the rest of the working class went to the youngsters.

The figures on this topic are always startling. Six or seven million young people without steady employment of any sort. Millions of sons and daughters of painfully impoverished working class families. Every year more than 500,000 new recruits for a growing army of hopelessness pour from the schools and tenements. Hundreds of thousands who bum their way from town to town. It is as though this whole generation were suddenly cut off by some huge blank wall from every possibility of productive labor for itself and for society.

The new world war comes as a fitting climax to this. The youth are to be torn to bits by some high explosive shell that they never even got a chance to manufacture. In huge quantities, America's most precious natural resource will soon be shipped off and floated across the water like logs to a sawmill. Capitalism can no longer make a profit out of our work, but it can make one out of our death.

Even now there are still those fond parents who delude themselves with the hope that in a broken trigger finger or in cultivated flat feet lies the hope for their son's safety. The lame and the crippled are those who accounted the most fortunate today. But what are the prospects for those who are able to avoid the battlefield for a while and raise themselves on the bodies of the war dead to a job in America's factories? Here again, the youth of this country can see their fate clearly pictured in the European nations.

What Happened to Youth in England

When the war broke out, weekly hours leaped to 60 and over for boys and girls in English industry. Since that time, hours have been stabilized at 57 per week for children under 16 and 18 years of age, according to the recent report of the British Home Office as related in the Manchester Guardian. Night work for girls, not so long ago the most insidious enemy of British womanhood according to budding young orators for the Liberal Party, has been restored. This is going on in the land of the most advanced and deeply rooted social legislation in the capitalist world. The Factories Act has not been repealed. Its vital provisions are simply set aside by permits from the Home Office.

In the years when youthful British capitalism was piling up the surplus of wealth which gave it world domination, the most brutal exploitation of child and youthful labor was the rule. Stories of children driven half naked with cuffs and blows to the factories only to fall asleep at the loom were often uncovered by investigating commissions. Now, in its last years, English imperialism rule itself up on the same supports. The only difference is that the Liberal Party orators say nothing today, while the Labor Party orators have entered the government and direct their rebukes to unpatriotic children!

This is the future that America's youth are offered by the bosses. When a world slaughter at last makes jobs available, they will be jobs at low wages and long hours—for some of us. For the vast majority of us the draft machine is already prepared to push us between the grinding millstones of the Western Front.

Do the forum lecturers and the bosses' apologists really believe that the youth will go through all this without going into "politics"? We know better. We know that the day is not far away when the young unemployed and young workers will find their way to the politics that will sweep from the earth the system which has caused them so much suffering. They will find the leadership for this task not in the "politics" of the two boss parties, but in the party of working class revolution—the Socialist Workers Party.

TWO GOOD WAR STORIES

J. Walden, member of the United Auto Workers Union, recalls two good war stories, which are now going the rounds of the labor press:

During the war the coal miners in Wales went on strike for more pay. After several weeks Lloyd George was sent to settle the strike because of his experience in fooling workers. He made a long speech about their patriotic duty to work long hours for short wages. When the miners remained grimly silent, he shouted: "How would you like to mine coal for the Kaiser?" A little Welsh miner stood up and asked: "How much does the Kaiser pay for mining coal?" Next day the strike was settled.

In Scotland a foreman was trying to scare a worker into going to war by telling him a German would come over and take his home and job; The worker said: "If any German wants to pay rent on the shack I live in and work like a mule for you on this cheap job, he don't have to fight me, all he has to do is tell me."

ST. PAUL LABOR WARNS AGAINST GOVERNMENT ACTS

(Continued from Page 1)

already developed" a move "under the guise of a national emergency," to nullify labor's gains, notably the Walsh-Healey Act and the Wage and Hour Act.

The central body's resolution pointed out that "it has been the experience of Labor that Labor-hating industrialists have always taken advantage of any national emergency to seek the destruction of the trade union movement through restrictive emergency laws and Presidential proclamations."

In a second resolution the Trades & Labor Assembly concurred with a resolution recently passed by the New York Electrical Workers' Union, Local 8, denouncing the government's "anti-trust" persecutions of the trade unions as calculated to destroy the trade union movement here as it was destroyed "in the dictator nations of Europe." Washington, it said, "is rapidly becoming a government by indictments and decrees."

The Machine Means Different Things --- Depends Who Owns It!

By ANTOINETTE KONIKOW

Mrs. Smith, my neighbor who always lived in the country, moved to town when her husband got work in a nearby factory. She likes to chat with me when we meet on the stairs, and expresses her delight with the modern improvements in her new home.

"What a relief to have a gas stove," she told me. "I remember how I used to slave carrying up coal and sifting ashes." Then she spoke about the sewing machine bought on the installment plan and how simply and quickly dresses for Mollie and Louise could be made. If only Charlie keeps his job, she plans to get a vacuum cleaner and her eyes shone at the joyous prospect, as she told me about it.

"Yes, this housekeeping machinery is certainly a help," I remarked. "Help!" Mrs. Smith said, "why, it is a blessing. Caring for my five kids kept me constantly on my feet and my back always

ached. Now I find time to rest and may even go to one of those meetings you always talk about."

BUT MACHINERY SEEMS A CURSE, TOO

A few days later, Mrs. Smith stopped again for a neighborly chat. Her face was not as radiant as the previous time. "Charlie told me last night that they have a new machine in his factory. It is a new fangled one that can do the work of five men, or rather any man can now do in one hour what used to take five hours."

I looked at her troubled face. "Why that ought to be fine for your husband. He will not have to work long hours. He will be home much earlier and will earn so much more."

Mrs. Smith did not appreciate my joke. "Why are you kidding me? You know what it means and I'm worried to death. Charlie explained it to me. Unless they expand the business, and that appears unlikely, four out of five men will lose their jobs and Charlie may be one of them."

I invited Mrs. Smith into my apartment and we continued our conversation. "We spoke only a few days ago of the blessings of machines you have at home. You, yourself, pointed out that they save you time and labor. Why should the new machine in the factory not do likewise for your husband?"

Mrs. Smith answered quickly, "The machines in my home are my own." "Just so," I agreed, "the machines in your home are yours and they are a blessing, but the machines in the shop belong to the boss and instead of a blessing they may mean your husband's unemployment. But while they seem a curse to the worker, they bring more profit to the boss. To him they are a blessing."

SOCIALISM WILL MAKE MACHINES A BLESSING TO EVERYBODY

In other words, the machine—a product of human ingenuity and progress—is a blessing to the one who owns it. If the machinery in the shop belonged to the workers, they would get more leisure and rest whenever a new, improved machine is introduced. That is

exactly what we Socialists try to explain to the workers.

"A big machine in the factory cannot belong to one worker as your small sewing machine belongs to you. But it can belong to all the workers, or to a workers' state. Then every modern improvement in machinery instead of striking terror in the heart of a worker would be welcomed because it would ease their labor just as your little machines do at home."

Mrs. Smith was quite amazed. The comparison of machines in the factory and at home had evidently never occurred to her. Then she sadly shook her head. "It sounds right, but machinery belongs to the bosses and they would never permit workers to use it that way."

"Well," was my answer, "the workers in Russia succeeded in getting all the factories and mines and transportation in their hands. True it did not work out as it should have because workers of other countries did not follow their example. Also in Russia the workers were unable to stop a bureaucracy from grabbing power away from them. But the revolution in Russia proved it can be done and the experience of the workers there will teach the workers of the whole world how to avoid the mistakes made in Russia."

The machines have taught the workers a great deal. Because of large machines thousands of workers gather in one factory, they learn to organize into trade unions to protect their rights against the greedy capitalist. But while trade unionism is the first step to help the worker, it cannot solve the unemployed problem and many other problems, such as crises and war. Only ownership of the machines by the Workers' State will assure for the worker security of work and leisure. To achieve that task is the work of the Socialist Workers Party.

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