

SOCIALIST APPEAL

Vol. III—No. 5 Saturday, February 4, 1939
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 six 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.

MAX SHACHTMAN Editor
HAROLD ROBERTS FELIX MORROW Associate Editors
S. STANLEY, Business Manager

The Hague Decision

The professional democrats are in a dither of joy over the decision of the Circuit Court of Appeals in Philadelphia. It upheld and extended the injunction issued three months ago by Federal Judge Clark restraining Mayor Hague of Jersey City from interfering with the right to free speech and assemblage of the C.I.O., the American Civil Liberties Union and numerous individuals.

The court's two-to-one decision is saluted by A.C.L.U. attorney Morris Ernst as "more than we had hoped for." Soft-headed liberals and labor leaders echo the triumphant sentiment.

We are ready to join in the rejoicing over this "victory for labor and free speech." But not until we have actually seen labor—all sections of it—actually exercising the right of free speech and assemblage day in and day out in Jersey City.

Anyone who thinks that the pieces of paper on which the majority of the court in Philadelphia wrote its decision, are enough to guarantee the real exercise of these rights, is duping himself or others.

It wasn't paper, not even legal-sized foolscap, that decided things up to now in Jersey City. Paper isn't going to decide them from now on, either. It was power that decided.

Who has that power today? The same people who had it yesterday and will continue to have it until it is taken from them: Hague, his uniformed thugs of the Police Department, and the fascist hooligans who wear no uniforms but are at his beck and call.

Who has an even greater power? The workers of Jersey, who outnumber the forces of Hague ten to one, fifty to one, a hundred to one.

Why has Hague, with his smaller forces, been able to keep labor on the run? Because labor is not conscious of its enormous strength, of the need of exerting its strength, and of the ease with which it could win once it brought its strength into play.

If the workers of New Jersey are going to depend upon a paper decision of a court, they are doomed to disappointment. In the first place, Hague doesn't bother about courts. He relies on his power, he uses it to the full and very boldly, and labor might well take a leaf out of his book. In the second place, Hague can still pull a hundred legal tricks out of his sleeve with which to confound and confuse the workers.

He can still appeal to the Supreme Court, and he's going to. He can change his dictatorial law, as the Philadelphia court decision admits, so that it is one-hundred percent legal and still prohibits the exercise of the right of free speech and free assembly.

Or he can do better yet: He can adopt the "right" kind of law, one that will satisfy every court in the country. He can let labor meet in public, with a permit or without one. And then he can—as most likely he will—send his tough-guys down to the meeting to break it up anyway.

Who is going to defend labor at these assault-ed meetings?

The judges from Philadelphia? Will they come down to fight the battles of the working class right in Jersey City? If they do, it will be the first time in history it ever happened.

The Hague police? Will they protect the meetings? Nine chances out of ten, they'll join the hoodlums to crack the workers' skulls; the tenth time, they'll stand by laughing themselves sick.

Is it hopeless? Not at all! It is hopeless so long as the workers lie down on their backs and wait for someone else to do their fighting for them.

There is a force capable of smashing Hague and his agents.

That force has plenty of strength—more than enough—to protect itself, to protect and guarantee its rights.

That force is the organized, militant working class itself!

In a strike, the unions organize their pickets to defend themselves from company gunmen, from scabs, from police. The unions are right, every time, for that's the only way to win.

That's what is needed in Jersey City—and every other locality where labor faces the same problem.

Let the trade unions organize thousands of workers into a Workers Defense Guard, one capable of protecting their meetings, and we'll see how quickly Mr. Hague-Hitler topples off his high horse.

Call Their Bluff!

The big, propertied farmers of the National Grange threaten higher food prices unless all processors and food-handlers are exempted from the Wage and Hour Act.

The Independent Telephone Association threatens to go out of business, and throw out of work the employees of its 12,000 exchanges, if it is compelled to raise wages and reduce hours.

The trick is not a new one. Every time the capitalists want to smash or evade a law which gives labor even the tiniest bit of protection, they resort to similar threats.

We have always held that if the workers do not protect their own interests, by their own class action, there is no law on paper that will do it for them.

They threaten to raise food prices if a minimum wage—and a pretty low minimum it is!—is paid? Then call their bluff! Let joint committees of poor farmers, agricultural labor, the trade unions and the consumers establish their control over processing and handling plants and control over prices.

They threaten to close down the telephone exchanges and throw tens of thousands out of work? That's a frank admission of capitalist bankruptcy. They admit that they are incapable of running their industry and employing their workers at minimum wage-and-hour conditions.

They admit that the profits of a handful of bloated stockholders stand in the way of even the lowest level of decent human living for masses of people. Either they continue to get their profits—or more tens of thousands join the ranks of the unemployed.

Call their bluff! If they can't run industry, or refuse to do so, then run them out. Let them make way for those who can and want to.

The masses need a government that will take over industry under workers' control.

The workers really run the industries now. What they need is to take the ownership and control of industry out of the hands of the self-confessed bankrupts!

Spain and the Pacifists

A leaflet recently issued by several pacifist groups, including the youth committee of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, Pax, the Catholic Worker, the Student Peace Service of the American Friends Service Committee, and the National Youth Committee of the War Resisters League, reveals more clearly than ever before the pacifist's downright treachery to workers' struggles.

The leaflet is at one with Father Coughlin's followers in calling upon the Roosevelt administration to continue its arms embargo against Spain. It calls for solving the Spanish civil war by mediation "if possible by a non-governmental international committee composed of such people as George Lansbury." And if Franco does not consent? The leaflet has nothing further to say.

We can scarcely find words to describe this piece of swinishness. Elsewhere in this issue we make clear that we have no illusions about the amount of aid anti-fascist Spain can expect from Roosevelt & Co., nor do we believe that the Loyalist struggle must stand or fall by such aid. But no sincere anti-fascist can stand on any other ground except that the Loyalists have a right to purchase arms here and in France, and that those who deprive them of this right are thereby aiding Franco.

Among leaders of these pacifist groups are important members of Norman Thomas' Socialist party: Paul Jones, of the national board of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, is state chairman of the Ohio Socialist party; Jesse Holmes, a leader of the Friends Service Committee, is state chairman of the Pennsylvania Socialist party; a prominent New York associate of Thomas, Jessie Wallace Hughan, is secretary of the War Resisters League; others are Devere Allen, Charlotte Bentley and Winston Dancis. That these traitors to the struggle of the Spanish workers will not be expelled by Norman Thomas, we take for granted. What is important is what the remaining militants in the Socialist party will do in the face of this new piece of treachery.

"Your Interests in South America Are Menaced!"



New Soviet Decrees Reflect Acute Crisis In Production

By JOHN G. WRIGHT

On December 29, Stalin officially promulgated the latest of his "labor decrees," to accompany a previous decision to "increase the productivity of labor by 25% while cutting wages 14% and more.

The publication of this decree—which completely invalidates the labor laws of the Soviet Union introduced under Lenin in December 1922 at the beginning of the New Economic Policy—was preceded by a ritualistic campaign in the press of only two weeks duration. To believe Stalin (and the Daily Worker) it was the workers of Russia themselves who insisted on the passage of laws which are almost without parallel in reactionary labor legislation. Only the system of "ink books" is comparable to the "system of labor booklets" introduced by Stalin as a New Year's boon, 22 years after the October Revolution.

As for the other provisions in the decree, they violate not only all previous labor legislation but "the great Stalinist Constitution" itself. And all this was headlined in the Daily Worker as follows: "SOVIET ACTS TO INCREASE SOCIALIST PRODUCTIVITY HAMPERED BY THOSE WHO ABUSE SOCIAL SECURITY."

"Democratic" Procedure

The decree was issued without even a consultation of the Supreme Council which is scheduled to convene shortly. It sufficed for the passage of this law for Stalin to sign it in the name of the "Communist Party of Russia." Molotov signed it for the "Council of People's Commissars" (the majority of whom have been purged as "wreckers" in the past year), while Shvernik invested it with the "authority" of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions. And if any further proof of the legality of this decree was required, the Russian worker could turn to the pages of the latest issue of Sovetskaya Yustitsia (the official organ of Vyshinsky's Department of Justice) wherein it is proved that all former "theories of labor and labor laws in the U.S.S.R. have been permeated with capitalist counter-revolutionary spirit." Why consult the Supreme Council on such a detail?

Workers Blamed Now

A short time ago the disorganization of industry was laid at the door of "wreckers" and "saboteurs," especially of the "Trotskyite-Zinovievite-Bukharinite" variety.

Thousands of Old-Law Tenements

There are thousands of other condemned old-law tenements in New York City, many of them occupied, which likewise present a constant threat to residents and passers-by.

Why do the city authorities fail to take the necessary precautionary measures to protect the lives of the people living in and traveling through these danger spots? The tenement owners have adequately demonstrated that they will do nothing, until compelled, to eradicate these hazards.

The city fathers, although fully informed of the conditions, do nothing to supply the necessary compensation.

That compulsion will come only from the slum-dwellers and from the workers generally. They must protest against living in such buildings and such neighborhoods.

Article 119 of the Constitution guarantees, among other things, rest and leisure to Soviet citizens. We quote this "guarantee": "The right to rest and leisure is ensured by... the institution of annual vacations with pay for workers and other employees and the provision of sanatoria, rest homes and clubs serving the needs of the toilers." But Article 119 has been improved by Stalin. Henceforth social security will be provided on the following basis: "100 per cent" only if the worker has remained "in one and the same factory or institution" for more than six years; 80 per cent if his "labor booklet" shows a record of three to six years' stay in one and the same place; 60 per cent for two to three years and 50 per cent for anything below that. The Daily Worker heads this paragraph of the decree with the caption "High Benefits."

In the columns of the Socialist Appeal we have time and again explained the underlying economic roots of the oppressive measures, purges and frame-ups of the bureaucracy; we forecast that far from solving his internal difficulties in this way, Stalin was only laying the foundation for new pitfalls. The explanation for the latest and most drastic measures of Stalin to maintain his shaky regime is to be found in the pages of the Soviet press itself.

Economic Crisis

In the middle of December Soviet economic life took an abrupt plunge. Production in all spheres suddenly dropped 50 per cent and more. The only figures made public are those for the key industries, and we can only cite these. Falsified as they are, the picture they present is unmistakable. In the table below we reproduce the "plan" figures (in thousands of tons) for December together with the output during the period of "agitation" for the new labor laws:

Table with 4 columns: Item, Plan, Dec. 14, Dec. 15, Dec. 17, Dec. 19. Rows include Iron, Steel, Rolled products, Coal.

Car loadings which had reached the daily total of 100,000 in the summer dropped from 85,000 on Dec. 13 to 50,000 on Dec. 18. The same trend is shown in all the industries for which figures are available. When this catastrophic and unprecedented drop was first made public, the official explanation was: "snowstorms." After adding "snowdrifts" to the "storms," they then proceeded to print even lower figures without any official alibi. Since then, all pretences have been dropped. It has been publicly admitted that the "plan" for 1938 had collapsed. The "plan" figures for January have been slashed. Production today, it is claimed, is back where it was in the early days in December, which is below the production of three years ago, i.e., in 1935!

It will be some time before we learn the whole truth about the actual occurrences in Russia in the latter part of December, and for that matter, at the present time. But it is no guess-work on our part to assert that there is no other explanation for the sudden drop in production, and the subsequent emergency legislation than this, that the Russian workers either stayed away from the plants or struck on the job by the millions. Certainly, there was also the customary phenomenon of breakdown of machinery and of production, inadequate supplies, etc. But the scope of the "breakdown" and the "steady" improvement since the low point in the middle of December can be explained only by "labor shortage."

The fact that Pravda has been compelled to thunder against "lax executives," the fact that it went so far as openly to admit that "certain directors are afraid to fire shirkers for fear of creating for themselves difficulties with labor supply" (Jan. 15); the additional fact that the administration has been compelled to "soften" its original regulations and permit re-employment of workers fired from a plant within six months, etc.—all these and other facts support the view that the Russian workers have entered into the phase of an open struggle against the Stalin regime.

that the latter is defending itself in the only way it knows.

Spain: A Lesson For France

AN EDITORIAL

...the Paris Commune of 1871 was drowned in blood by the French reaction, Karl Marx set himself to studying the lessons of that defeat so that in its next great struggle labor would not lose again.

When the Revolution of 1905 went down in defeat under the heel of Czar Nicholas the Bloody, Lenin set himself to studying the lessons so that next time the defeat would be wiped out by a victory.

In November 1917, the lessons of the 12-year-old defeat were learned by the Russian workers and peasants. They did not repeat the old mistakes, but avoided them. The result was the first magnificent victory of the masses over their oppressors.

Now the Spanish working class has gone down to defeat, as did its brothers before it in Austria and Germany.

Popular Front Disease

The cruel disease that paralyzed the workers in face of the fascist foe, carries the name of "Popular Front."

Remember: the Popular Front said, "Don't fight your capitalist class. Unite with it. Rely on it. Subordinate yourself to it. That'll make you respectable, and you will be able to win the fight."

Remember: the Popular Front said, "Don't fight for socialism. Don't try to take power and control your own destiny. Don't touch private property or you'll make the capitalists angry with you."

Remember: the Popular Front said, "Don't irritate the foreign imperialists of France and London and Washington. Otherwise they will not help you defeat fascism. Otherwise they will not send you arms and food. Otherwise they will not recognize your government."

Remember: the Popular Front said, "Don't free the colonies. Don't give independence to the Moors in Morocco. Otherwise England and France will abandon you, because they are afraid of losing their own African colonies."

Everything the Popular Front promised and guaranteed the workers proved to be a fraud, a delusion, a death-trap. Under the whip of the Stalinists, the social democrats, and the anarchists, the workers and peasants of Spain were driven into this trap. Now they are at the tender mercy of Franco's assassins.

Leaders Flee, Masses Remain

The leaders can flee to safety. We notice with some astonishment in the last issue of the Lovestone paper an advertisement of a class in Marxism which is being organized in Chicago. Our astonishment is aroused by the name of the instructor, the not entirely unknown Harry M. Wicks.

At least up to recently, Brother Wicks was one of the luminaries of the Stalinist party. A standardized bureaucrat, he was a Lovestoneite when Lovestone was kingfish of the Communist party, and a Browderite after Lovestone was shown the door. In the former capacity, he was a Trotsky-killer of the first rank; in the latter capacity, he added to his repertory the customary invective against Lovestoneism.

His principal claim to fame, however, goes back quite a few years. In 1920, he appeared before the businessmen of Gary, Indiana, as a renegade radical to expose the inner workings of the communist movement. The Gary "Post" of March 25, 1920, quoted him as saying: "With very few exceptions, he said, the radicals are not Americans. Most of the Socialists are people of foreign birth and citizenship and many of them do not even speak the English language. Bill Haywood and his satellites should not be tolerated in this country. Mr. Wicks said, he had been advising American Legion members not to permit these vermin to talk to them, but to knock them down. That, he said, is the only language they understand."

Now, it appears, after several years of faithful service under Mr. Browder, the well-known patron of the American Legion, Brother Wicks has decided to throw in his lot with his former tillycumb, Jay Lovestone. We are not indignant about this because, as physical science points out, sewage cannot rise above the level of its source.

Nevertheless, it does seem to us that, in the interests of public hygiene, the Lovestone paper owes its readers some explanation of the circumstances in which Brother Wicks divorced the Stalinist party and came to the Lovestone group. Otherwise, some people might think that what this spotless revolutionist did was to sneak out of the cover of darkness and in the hope that nobody would take note of his shift. And surely the Lovestoneites wouldn't like to have it noised about that that is the way people prefer to join them.

SENATE CARRIES HOUSE SLASH OF RELIEF BUDGET

(Continued from Page 1)

future. It is allegedly designed to "take politics out of relief," and was motivated on the surface by the entirely true charges that relief has been used by the New Deal machine as a major means for garnering votes.

The amendment prohibits all officials of W.P.A. from making electioneering speeches and forbids any solicitation of funds from W.P.A. workers "for political purposes." All the political history of this country proves that

this amendment will have no effect whatever in getting rid of the manipulation of the relief set-up for the benefit of the Republican or Democratic party organizations.

But the catch is that it will be utilized to try to prevent the entry of unemployed organizations into working-class politics, and to stop the attempt to win the W.P.A. workers to the perspective of independent labor political action.

The relief bill now has gone to a joint committee of the House and Senate so that the slight discrepancies between the two branches of Congress may be ironed out and a final formulation agreed upon. Since both branches have approved the bill, there is no reason to suppose that it will be raised in the

joint committee.

For the unemployed to take this relief action of Congress lying down would be about the same thing as to commit slow suicide.

Congress will change its mind, will wake up and take notice, as soon as, just as soon as, and only as soon as the unemployed show something on their own hook. Since Congress opened, the unemployed have trusted Roosevelt, Lewis, Lasser and LaGuardia to win concessions for them. These dime-novel heroes have by now had a chance to show how much they are going to accomplish for the unemployed: exactly nothing. The unemployed have now got to take their own job on their own shoulders, or look for the nearest hole to crawl into.

OLD LAW HOUSES PERIL WORKERS

Slum Tenants Must Move Against Owners

NEW YORK—Swiftly and without warning, the whole front wall of an unoccupied tenement at Eleventh Avenue and 55th Street collapsed last week, and bricks and debris tumbled precipitously to the sidewalk below. A few moments before, a group of children had been playing there, unaware of the impending disaster.

They had moved on, fortunately, and at the precise moment of the collapse no one was in front of the building. The only casualty was an empty automobile.