

By Dwight Macdonald

SPARKS IN THE NEWS

Hard Times at the Library

A headline in today's paper reads: "LACK OF FUNDS COMPELS LIBRARY TO CURTAIL USE OF READING ROOMS." Free libraries and free schools have long been among the proudest boasts of bourgeois democracy. These concessions were won by the masses in the heyday of capitalism, when the ruling class could afford them. But the shadows are closing in on this kind of "democracy." In the last few months the processes of free education have broken down in an alarming way here and there throughout the country—a highly significant trend of which I shall have something to say in another place. And now comes the announcement that the special reference rooms of the New York Public Library—American history, art, music, science, periodicals, newspapers, etc.—will close at six every night (instead of ten) and will not be open at all on Sundays (instead of being open from one to ten p.m.). An average of 1500 persons use these rooms on week-nights, and from 3000 to 4000 on Sundays. Most of these are probably workers, who can come in only in their off hours. For them, the "public" library has become inaccessible.

This is, of course, by no means the first such retrenchment. Year after year, as the depression has worn on, the library has been buying fewer books, cutting down on salaries, curtailing its services to the reading public. And more economies will have to be practiced before long, according to the president of the board of trustees, Frank L. Polk, of the great corporation law firm: Davis, Polk, Wardwell, Gardner and Reed. The difficulty, according to Mr. Polk, is that the library's budget is unbalanced. And how much is needed to restore the balance—and also the essential services just cut out? Some huge sum, doubtless, or our enlightened and progressive city administration would never have allowed the library to be thus crippled? Well, believe it or not, this sum needed is exactly \$100,000. I daresay Mr. Polk makes at least that much all by himself in one year's practice of corporation law.

Herr Professor LaGuardia

In the column right next to the announcement of the public library's difficulties, there is a long story headed: "MAYOR AND AIDES TO TEACH AT NEW YORK UNIVERSITY." The title of the course which the Mayor and his aides are to give is, "Government and Administration of New York City." I suggest that in the first lecture, the leaders of the LaGuardia administration—which is probably as "ad-

vanced" and "liberal" a big city government as you will find in this country at the moment—explain why it seems to them wiser to spend \$40,000,000 on a new bridge from Manhattan to Brooklyn than \$190,000 to keep the city's chief library open at night; why it is more important to spend tens of millions on an East Side Express Highway, to allow people in pleasure cars to get downtown ten minutes quicker, than to spend \$190,000 to allow workers to use the library after the day's work is over; why Mr. Moses gets his tens of millions for fancy luxury projects like Jones Beach and Mr. Whalen gets his subsidy for the high-priced and useless World of Tomorrow, while \$100,000 is considered too much to pay to maintain vital services at the city's main public library.

Our Four-Billion-Dollar-Baby

I must confess I had some sneaking doubts about this American democracy we are all to die for in the next war when I read two recent news items. Almost on the same day, the Social Security Board revealed that the average earnings in 1937 of the 30,168,000 wage earners on its rolls came to just \$890; while the Ways & Means Committee of the House published the salaries of some 50,000 of these wage-earners who had received \$15,000 or more each in 1937. It is a long step from \$890 to the \$1,300,000 which went to Mr. Mayer of the films, or the \$900,000 which went to Mr. Hearst of the newspapers, or the \$419,000 which went to President Watson of International Business Machines Corp., or the \$381,000 which President Hill received from the American Tobacco Co.

But then I reflected on a third governmental report which has just appeared, and I realized that all of us, rich and poor alike, share the common ownership of a magnificent property worth currently about \$4,000,000,000. This report is the Naval Expense Account for the fiscal year 1938, a matter of eighty-six pages of figures. The man-in-the-street, struggling to feed his family on \$890 a year, often fails to realize he is co-owner of four billion dollars worth of guns and torpedoes and armor plate, including \$120,000,000 worth of heavy and light cruisers, \$275,000,000 worth of destroyers, \$328,000 worth of "flags and bunting," and \$33 worth of livestock. It is a comforting thought, I figure that each and every one of the 130,000,000 inhabitants of this great democracy owns just \$32.50 worth of the above-named commodities. If no one minds, I'll take mine in cash, please.

MEN AND WOMEN OF LABOR

OUT OF THE PAST

By EMANUEL GARRETT

THOMAS MUENZER

(1497—Decapitated, May 27, 1525)

Turbulence, ferment, rebellion—thus was the sixteenth century born. New systems, and new ideas grappled with the foundations of old. Capitalism, a lusty infant, spread its arms and crowded the princes and lords who ruled by feudal right of land ownership, and serf labor.

The merchant class, the townsmen, grew wealthier, tapped the resources of the known and settled world, spread the tentacles of trade, and challenged the authority of feudal might. In England, where serious upheavals had already taken place, their economic power was clearly established; political power they had yet to seize. In Germany they were first beginning to feel their importance, to grow prosperous.

And as they extended their activities, slowly remodeling the basis of social organization, the downtrodden serfs, the newly important artisans, and the newly created plebeians who formed a reservoir of unskilled labor became restive.

The merchants who sought to undermine the traditional authority of feudal lord and church (itself the richest and most powerful of the feudal landowners) were echoed in the mighty thunderbolt that Martin Luther hurled at traditional doctrine, and the established church. Luther took religion out of the hands of a few lords (priests), made it the property of the masses, presented the bible in native German instead of unintelligible Latin. (Religion, the church, completely dominated the thought of the day; social upheaval therefore couched itself in religious terms, sought justification there, etc.)

Goes Beyond Protestant Reformation

Thomas Muenzer was among those who avidly took possession of Luther's views. A bright young theologian, Luther had even helped him secure a pastorate. An eloquent preacher, he attacked the monks bitterly. Luther had however only cracked the shell of society. Muenzer was soon far ahead of him; shell and all had to go. Lu her who had intrigued him, now repelled him. For Muenzer had become a man of action and revolution who ranged himself on the side of the oppressed masses against the rulers, the possessors, and the easy living reformers (like Luther "that easy living flesh of Wittenberg").

His small, swarthy figure became a popular sight among the plebeians and peasants who listened to his harangues against princes and middle-of-the-way reformers. Way ahead of his day which lacked the material prerequisites for the execution of his views, Muenzer preached the community of goods, the "Inner Light," in effect the right of each man to hold his own views. Some of his ideas, daring for his time, became democratic commonplace three centuries later.

Several times he settled as preacher in various German cities; as often he was chased out by the fat-bellies and the worried town-folk who were willing to go so far in social

criticism, but no further. Denounced by Luther, he encouraged the peasants in Thuringia to rise, together with the urban proletarians and the miners, against the moneyed and feudal lords. Driven out of Muhlhausen, he travelled with his close co-worker Pfeiffer through southern Germany. Ungodly rulers, he told those he met, must be driven out, killed. The usurpers, he told them, say "Thou shalt not steal" and then grab everything. But when an artisan "commits the slightest transgression, he has to hang, and Dr. Liar (Luther) says to all to this: Amen."

Peasant War Unfolds

Towards the end of 1524, the peasant masses had definitely begun to move towards revolution. Their aims were incorporated in a document, the Twelve Articles, which called for a plain gospel (i.e., religious services in their own language and within their own comprehension and of their own choosing), and freedom from serfdom. By March, 1525, the movement was quite general. By May they had achieved considerable successes. But as is the case with every peasant movement, there was no real solidarity between the various sections. Each section waged its battle in a limited and provincial sphere. At the beginning they were favored by the equal disorganization of the lords; but as the lords organized, largely under the leadership of Philip of Hesse, and spurred on by Luther, the peasants were beaten in battle after battle. History was much too young for a victorious popular insurrection; the peasants couldn't reorganize society, a proletariat was lacking to lead them, the next step in social development was capitalism.

In Muhlhausen, Muenzer and Pfeiffer had spread their propaganda. As preachers they had at first demanded the privilege of sitting in at council meetings. At a propitious moment, when the population was called together to answer a muster roll, Muenzer urged the assembled people to kick out the old government and take the reins into their own hands. This they did. A new government was decreed, to be run by an "Eternal Council." Community of property was proclaimed.

Philip of Hesse moved on Frankhausen where Muenzer with 8,000 men had made his stand. Philip asked for an armistice, but, as he had done in other cases, violated the armistice before it had elapsed. Muenzer's troops were defeated. 5,000 of them were slaughtered. Muenzer was taken prisoner.

His captors asked him to explain his deeds. He told them he acted and preached as he had because they, the princes, had sacrificed everything to lust and avarice.

Muenzer was handed over to the executioner. For a day he was tortured horribly by thumbscrew and rack, then thrown into the dungeon.

On May 27, two days after his capture, the executioner did his work. Muenzer's mutilated head was lifted on a pike, and displayed as a warning against revolt. It became instead a symbol of the struggle against oppression, an inspiration to future generations of rebels, the founders of German Marxian socialism.

State Solons Battle For Slum Landlord

Inadequate Housing Bill Puts Burden on Workers—Violates Voters' Demands

By GRACE SAUNDERS

A disgraceful housing bill that does not begin to solve the need for slum clearance and low-cost housing projects has just been brought out on the floor of the New York State Legislature, one week before adjournment. The bill is totally inadequate in the amount of money authorized, it will make new housing projects so expensive as to be almost prohibitive, and contains virtually all the reactionary, landlord-sponsored provisions that have been denounced and rejected by everybody seriously concerned about the housing problem.

Voters last Fall authorized the expenditure of \$300,000,000 for housing. The solons at Albany have pared this down to a miserly \$50,000,000 for the current fiscal year. As a sop to the opposition that it is known beforehand will be forthcoming, provision is made for the expenditure of an additional \$100,000,000 at some future date. The measure calls for a 40-year, instead of a 60-year amortization period,

Survey Shows the Value of W.P.A. To Entire Nation

(Special to the Socialist Appeal)

WASHINGTON, May 8.—The completely reactionary and vicious nature of President Roosevelt's proposed further slash of W.P.A. rolls was revealed still more glaringly by a nation-wide survey detailing the benefits of W.P.A. which was handed today to the President by a group of government officials and individuals closely linked with them.

The survey which was conducted in 48 states and summarizes 8,900 individual reports made by state, county, and city officials, not the recipients of W.P.A. jobs shows that W.P.A. projects have been of the "highest benefit to the public welfare."

More than 51 per cent of the individuals reporting stated that the W.P.A. failed in its task in only one particular, that it was not conducted on a large enough scale and that it lacked sufficient funds. Roosevelt proposes to remedy this situation by slashing W.P.A. still further and reducing its funds still further below minimum requirements.

After detailing the benefits of W.P.A. in providing work, in keeping up the skills of workmen, in providing communities and sections with useful public works and public activities, the report ended by recommending an "adequate long time National program dealing with unemployment."

which even the bill's sponsors admit will increase carrying charges on state projects \$2 or \$3 a room per month.

Burden on Workers
Consumer taxes on amusements, tobacco, etc., are to be permitted for securing funds for this amortization—thus shunting the financial burdens for the new projects on to the workers.

In addition, cities are to be required to match the state appropriations dollar for dollar. This provision will place a barrier in the path of the needed undertakings, for the cities are already heavily burdened with debts.

Furthermore, only partial tax exemption is to be granted housing projects. "The bill is patently a scheme to prevent any serious tackling of the disgraceful housing situation," it excludes overwiping consideration for the slum landlords, and displays a crass lack of interest in the needs of the slum-dwellers.

Jamming It Through
It is apparently the intention of the "people's representatives" to jam this shameful measure through both houses of the legislature in the hectic closing days of the current session, in the expectation that many legislators will vote for it as the best measure possible to obtain at this late date. A week before adjournment copies of the bill were not yet back from the printers. Only one typewritten copy was available for inspection by legislators who had to consider the problem.

'Death Watch' Casts Shadow Over Flint W.P.A. Offices

(Continued from Page 1) ing "Solidarity." Then they assembled in the Park where determined speeches were made by the union leaders.

At the meeting, plans were made for further militant action next week to carry on the fight, in addition to plans made to keep the "death watch" going.

Sentiment for the "death watch" has proved strong among Flint workers. In the great Buick division plants, a collection was taken up to aid the unemployed union.

Hundreds of people from all over town came in cars and on foot to see the demonstration. Some brought food, others donated funds.

Only the Communist Party-dominated Workers Alliance, with its characteristic timidity and company-union tactics, talked against the "death watch." Many Workers Alli-

Protests Mount On School Budget Cuts

Thousands of Teachers Face Dismissal—Y.P.S.L. Plans City Hall Picket Line

By W. K. MANUEL

NEW YORK.—Indignant protests against Mayor LaGuardia's cut of more than three and a half million dollars from the school budget poured in from educational, student and labor organizations this week as the City Council prepared to adopt the budget cut without allowing representatives of the opposition to be heard at public hearings.

A reactionary coalition of Democrats and Republicans in the State Legislature recently lopped off \$5,300,000 from the state educational budget, which added to the city's proposal to hack away another \$3,600,000 totals up to a nine million dollar decrease in funds for the public educational system. Unless immediate action is taken to rescind the cuts, conservative educators predicted that free education in New York would receive its most disastrous setback in a decade. Under the new conditions created by the cuts, thousands of regular teachers face dismissal, unwieldy classes will be further enlarged, tuition fees will be adopted in the free city colleges, summer sessions will be abolished, playgrounds closed, recreation and evening centers curtailed and other services scuttled entirely.

Passing the Buck
Caught red-handed in as low a piece of fiscal finagling as Tammany Hall ever attempted, Mayor LaGuardia's efforts to pass the buck to the State Legislature were promptly apiked by Howard W. Nudd, spokesman

for the Public Education Association.

In a statement placing responsibility for the cut directly on the Mayor, Mr. Nudd said "It is, of course, absurd for city officials to imply that they have done their part for the schools and that the crisis is entirely due to the shortsightedness of the Legislature. The city itself is particeps criminis to a large degree, for, Borough President Isaacs and City Council President Morris to the contrary notwithstanding, the city started the landslide, not merely by denying funds for expansion, but by cutting nearly \$3,600,000 from the amount which it granted to the schools this year out of its own resources." The Association called an emergency meeting of its Joint Conference of Civic Organizations, composed of no less than twenty groups, to consider ways and means of opposing the cut.

Y.P.S.L. Demonstrates
The Young People's Socialist League (4th International), youth section of the Socialist Workers Party, responded to the proposed cut with a spirited demonstration outside City Hall two weeks ago, demanding immediate appropriations to the school budget to gap the deficit. Y.P.S.L. representatives who attended public hearings on the budget, held at City Hall last Friday, were told that only those who favored the decreased budget would be heard. Following this the proceedings were handed over to reactionary spokesmen for the banks, insurance companies and big realty interests. Colonel Almes, mouthpiece of the Citizens Budget Committee, sounded off in a two-hour exhibition of oratorical flatulence against "unnecessary frills like public education" and urged the city to abolish the High School of Art and Music, where students with outstanding talent in the arts are given a specialized curriculum. After listening to several speakers assail the badly castrated budget as "still too high," Robert K. Strauss, Fusion flunkie in the Council, reminded them that "the Mayor is just as interested in cutting the budget as anybody."

Borough President Stanley Isaacs, member of a dozen Stalinist stooge organizations, and Council President Newbold Morris, contributor to the New Masses, approved the cuts in public education as members of the Board of Estimate and Apportionment.

The Y.P.S.L. has called meetings on college and high school campuses protesting the cuts, and is preparing a large picket line around City Hall in the near future.

Another function of the Y.C.L. convention will be to make certain changes in its declaration of principles in order to bring it up to date with its present political line. Such embarrassingly reminiscent points as "We condemn American intervention in the internal affairs of the Latin-American countries and the Philippines, and we support the Puerto Rican people in their fight for independence" will be eliminated. For it is obvious that the Stalinist movement, youth or adult, can no longer have any connection with movements for the liberation of oppressed colonial peoples, even if that connection is in an obscure document.

Jim-Crow Stalinists
A further indication of the rightward swing which this convention will mark may be seen from a recent article in the April pre-convention number of the Young Communist Review, which admits that Y.C.L. recruiting and education is on such a reactionary basis that in Chicago many branches exist on a Jim-Crow basis, dividing white and Negro youth into different groups!

Another step the convention will take will be the dissolution of student branches. These have in the past been centers of dissidence from the party line.

Jingo Note Loudest At Y.C.L. Meeting

By IRVING HOWE

NEW YORK.—The 9th national convention of the Young Communist League will open here this week-end with a mass meeting in Madison Square Garden. This convention will mark a climax to the drive to transform the Y.C.L. into an open jingo organization.

According to the preamble to the new Y.C.L. constitution proposed by its National Committee, the Y.C.L. formally abandons any pretense to revolutionary ideas and becomes an organization which has, among others, the following purposes: "Educate youth for citizenship in our democracy"; "Oppose all subversive efforts to attack, undermine or destroy our democracy from within or without"; and "promote clean living and develop healthy minds in healthy bodies and to protect the American home and family."

Despite the accompanying bashful mention of socialism, these points—especially the one on "subversive efforts" which means to be against all idea of revolution—show that the Y.C.L. is trying its desperate best to prove itself to be a respectable organization desiring to live at peace with the capitalist world and capitalist youth organizations.

Pro-War Rally
The convention will have as its main function the whipping up of a war spirit among the delegates, especially those who are not hardened bureaucrats. In view of the war crisis, the Y.C.L. leadership wants to make sure that the organization will serve as an integral part of the war machine and the convention is the place, the youthful Browders figure, to whip up an appropriate war-spirit.

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LEWIS BLASTS F.D.R. STAND

(Continued from Page 1)

hoped to achieve this in sufficient time before the coal commission sessions to have the U.M.W.A. tied up completely. The White House conference was marked by the high-handed and dictatorial attitude of Roosevelt towards the U.M.W.A. committee and the operators.

Union on Defensive
Roosevelt demanded that the mines be opened but he failed to say a word about protecting the rights of the workers involved. He deliberately left the false impression that the union was also responsible for the shut-down and the coal shortage.

Actually, the entire role of the U.M.W.A. has been completely defensive during the crisis that began on April 1 when the old contract expired. Inspired by Roosevelt's open double-cross of the miners and the entire C.I.O. which is involved in this key strike, Governor Chandler quickly announced his intention to send the strike-breaking National Guardsmen to Harlan county to open the mines.

'Daily Highlights of the N. Y. World's Fair

By RUTH JEFFRIES

May 2—The World of Tomorrow gave the American people a first lesson in how to receive the cream of the ruling class. A twenty-one gun salute, greeting Crown Prince Olav and Crown Princess Martha, served as a starter.

New York State announced that it had spent more than \$4,000,000 on parkways, bridges and landscaping for the World's Fair site, and \$2,200,000 more for its fair exhibit. No such investment for rehousing World of Today slum-dwellers.

May 3—Twenty-one guns for Crown Prince Frederick and Crown Princess Ingrid of Denmark. Are we listening? For \$3.25 an hour you'll see the Fair from a motorized wheel chair; and for only \$2.25 we can get selected college boys to push our chairs around. Why can't these colleges turn out a \$3.25 product—where is the value of a college education?

Inscriptions fronting the entrance to the W.P.A. pavilion: "This building contains the story of America's unemployed and what they have to offer America"; and "This exhibition shows the wealth created by the skill and artistry of America's unemployed." But it doesn't show the wealth they created (for capital) before they were robbed of even their jobs.

May 4—Nineteen guns for the Polish delegation. (A dictatorship isn't quite as good as a monarchy.)

May 5—Mayor La Guardia, "one of the great admirers of Finland," as he termed himself, said, "Mention the name of Finland and every American will admire your one biggest exhibit to the whole world—your national honor." He was referring to the isolated example of "honor" among the victorious Finns after the last World War.

The British Government is clasping America to her bosom in a fitful brotherly embrace; and so its Pavilion exhibits to millions of Americans the family tree of the Father of Our Country, tracing Washington's descent from King John. That should establish Our Father as an English ruler of good blood, and render us all loyal fighting subjects, just a little removed, of the British crown.

Columbia University's President, Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, called, in a high-sounding Collective-Security variation, for the President of the United States to "lead in the organization of the world for peace, with international security protected by the combined navies of the world." A gullible audience, fooled (as once before) by college-presidential oratory, cheered.

May 7—High restaurant prices at the Fair are causing a tide of complaint. For example, at the Casino of Nations: Soup, 25c; entree, \$1 and up; roast-beef sandwich, \$1; ham sandwich, 50c; American cheese sandwich, 40c; coffee or

tea, 15c. Even the "popular-priced" places charge 50% more than do comparable places, and for comparable dishes, outside.

May 8—"Ricksha boys," declared the N. Y. Times in one column, "have, by long odds, the most romantic jobs on the Fair Grounds. They meet such interesting people." And then in another column, it described the Fair after closing time, "Tired pushers—chatted wearily about their aching feet—(or) pushed their vehicles listlessly to the depot, changed attire and went home." Real Southern romance. Cashiers are also reported "as too tired by Sunday to do anything but sleep"; and so, adds the press, amused, "all they know about the Fair is what they read in the papers." A quaint sense of humor.

More than 350 Gold Star Mothers rose in unison when, at a luncheon of their group . . . those who were opposed to sending any American boys to Europe in the event of war (were asked to) stand up.—N. Y. Times. Add reasons for our "peace-loving" President's opposition to a people's referendum on war.

Yipsels Jailed for Aiding Calif. Agricultural Strikers

(Special to the Socialist Appeal)

FRESNO, Calif., May 8.—Della Pedroncelli and Norman Dorn, both members of the newly formed Fresno unit of the Young People's Socialist League, were in jail today, charged with inciting workers on the 600-acre Paul Mosesian Ranch to quit work and join the week-old strike of agricultural laborers for higher wages.

The strike was called Tuesday by the Farm Workers Association, the agricultural workers union in this area. More than 100 workers left the fields to demand an increase in wages from 20 to 30 cents an hour. They had been employed to thin prunes on the Paul Mosesian Ranch where conditions were intolerable.

Comrades Dorn and Pedroncelli were arrested when they went out to the orchards to persuade the 25 remaining workers to quit scabbing and join the strike.

The Yipsels have been actively aiding the strike by joining the picket line every day. Over the week end, Myra Tanner, leading member of the Y.P.S.L. in California, proceeded to the strike front and spoke to the strikers for more than an hour.

The Fresno Y.P.S.L. expects to continue to aid the strikers until victory is won.