

In the World of Labor

By Paul G. Stevens

Southport Conference of B.L.P. Reverses Stand on Conscription

Despite the tremendous wave of opposition against conscription in its ranks, despite its repeated avowal of loyalty to the party's anti-conscription stand, despite its rebuffs to Leon Blum who came from France to urge them fraternally to drop that stand in the name of social patriotic common sense, and despite the fact that only two weeks ago such prominent leaders as Ernest Bevin of the Transport Workers Union and John Marchbanks of the National Union of Railwaymen insisted that "even assuming that we are in a minority, and no one can judge yet," they were "still satisfied it would be right to resist this effort (of conscription) to destroy our liberties"—despite all this the Labour Party's leadership last week foisted upon the annual conference at Southport a reversal of policy on this crucial issue.

To be sure, the resolution adopted on this question does not bluntly come out in favor of conscription. It merely states that the party will not resist conscriptive measures. The funkies who run Transport House (the party headquarters) for British imperialism could not flaunt the rank and file sentiment too brahshly. But in taking the stand they did, they finally squared their position on conscription with their general "collective security" position, thus reassuring Chamberlain, making Blum and the French capitalists very happy and removing from their own path a very embarrassing inconsistency.

To make up for this change, so to speak, the Southport conference confirmed the expulsion of Sir Stafford Cripps and rejected the Popular Front line he espoused. From the point of view of their fundamental social patriotic position, the action against Cripps makes about as much sense as their previous opposition to conscription. Small wonder then, that a N. Y. Times correspondent from London reports that "the country tends to look upon the Churchill-Eden Tory combination, rather than upon the Labour Party, as the real opposition to Chamberlain."

More consistent is the reported decision of Transport House to make membership in the Militant Labor League incompatible with membership in the party. The M.L.L. has consistently opposed "collective security" and conscription and has recently been making considerable headway in local L.P. branches. It is attacked as "Trotskyist". The Militant, official organ of the League, announces in its last issue a campaign, centered around an organizing tour, to resist expulsion and to rally support in the local sections for revolutionary socialism.

In France: New Blows against the Opponents of Imperialist War

While the Flandin-Bonnet gang of "Munichois" pacifists (sic) and the Reynaud-Mandel gang of "collective security" war mongers jockey for position, while Blum and Paul Faure temporarily compose their differences at the Socialist Party convention by agreeing finally to bury the Popular Front (breaking off all relations with the C.P.), their government strikes new blows against the real opponents of imperialist war. "Democracy" is reserved only for the social patriots and their capitalist masters.

During the month of April a wave of resistance to the government's order recalling for additional service reservists of the class of 1936 who had already served more than their two years, spread throughout a number of regiments along the Maginot Line. Reservists in Strassburg began a hunger strike and refused to drill. The strike soon extended to Metz, Morange, Arras, Bitche and other points along the line of frontier fortifications. The entire daily press—Fascist to Stalinist—greeted the revolt with a conspiracy of silence. The revolutionary soldiers who led the revolt were all summarily imprisoned and the movement thus beheaded.

Issues of papers of the minorities who gave the movement prominence—our own comrades' *Lutte Ouvriere*, Jun 36, the organ of the Socialist Workers and Peasants Party, the anarchist paper *Libertaire*, the syndicalist papers *Revolution Proletarienne* and *Combat Syndicaliste* and several others were confiscated and their responsible editors subjected to prosecution.

The headquarters of the Socialist Workers and Peasants Party (S.P.O.P.) were raided in Cherbourg and several other cities and the party threatened with dissolution.

In the colonies, the anti-imperialist allies of the French revolutionists face similar persecution. In Tunis, three leaders of the dissolved Liberal Constitutional Party have been arrested for reconstituting cells of that party (the reconstituted organization of the L-Rocque Fascists is, of course, allowed to proceed with impunity). In Algiers, Chabane Ali, the editor of *El Ouma*, the paper of the People's Party of Algeria, whose recent election victory we reported in these columns, has been held in prison incommunicado under a despicable charge that is becoming usual in these persecutions: "Connivance with foreign powers".

5,000 Protest W. P. A. Cuts In Minnesota

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ed its way through the loop to the State W.P.A. offices, and returned to the Capitol where the delegation entered Stassen's office.

Governor Tries to Duck

It seemed that the Governor was nowhere around, though he had promised an appointment to the delegation. After an hour's wait, during which the unemployed milled through the Capitol halls, Governor Stassen was located at the St. Paul Athletic Club. He returned to the Capitol and met with the delegation, refusing every one of the demands of the demonstrators. Later he came out on the Capitol stairs to address the demonstration. In a demagogic talk he told the throng that they had a right to disagree with him if they didn't like his Old Age Lien Law, his Labor Law, etc.

"Hell," said a number of demonstrators, "we know we've got a right to disagree with you, and we do, all the way down the line."

Stassen denied that the State relief appropriation had been cut, though it is a matter of record that his administration has slashed one-third off last year's appropriation. He assured the unemployed that no one would starve in Minnesota, and urged the unemployed organizations to send him the names of all families who were in need. He promised to send out state investigators in such cases.

Demand Special Session
After he had ducked back in the Capitol, Max Goldman of the Federal Workers Section,

LYNCH NEGRO IN MISSISSIPPI

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on the head with a shovel. Rodgers lifted another shovel to defend himself, whereupon he was set upon, tied hand and foot, tortured and tossed into the river from which his body was recovered three days later.

Mississippi's Democratic Governor has made no protest, much less ordered action. Nor has any word been uttered on the lynching from the head of the party to which the Governor belongs, President Roosevelt.

Other Lynchings
The lynching of Rodgers is the fifth in these democratic states for 1939. It followed by only nine months the lynching in this same town of Claude Banks, on July 21, 1938. Other known lynchings during 1939 are: Walter Lee Frazier, shot, Eldorado, Arkansas; Charles Williams, hanged, Woodcliff, Georgia; Miles W. Brown (white), shot, Panama City, Florida; Lee Snell, shot, Daytona Beach, Florida.

Provocateur Exposed

Local San Francisco has expelled William de la Fuente, convicted and admitted thief of party funds, paid informer and provocateur.

Description: Age 24, height 5 feet-11 inches, weight 155, dark complexion, brown eyes, wears glasses, speaks with a slight stutter. Speaks Spanish fluently, apparently well educated, quick-witted, interesting conversationalist, interested in music, art, literature. Claims to be a journalist, has worked as clerical worker. Claims special knowledge of psychology. At time of exposure, May 20, 1939, had broken right arm in cast.

reporting for the committee, told the unemployed that Stassen had rejected all their state demands. A mighty shout went up for a special session of the State Legislature, after which the demonstration was officially called off, just as a heavy rainstorm began.

The excellent spirit of the demonstration and the sacrifice shown by the W.P.A. workers who participated, cannot be exaggerated. The W.P.A. administration had refused to declare Friday a holiday, so that each W.P.A. worker who demonstrated was sacrificing 8 hours of work at 68 cents an hour, or about \$5.50. Despite this, W.P.A. workers by the hundreds understood that it was well worth their while to demonstrate for their demands and against Roosevelt's new relief-slashing proposal and war machine. The unemployed of Minneapolis and St. Paul have spoken unmistakably for increased relief, for bread and not bullets.

W. A. A. Congress Shuns Action Needs of Jobless

Stalinists Organize "Right to Work Congress" to Whitewash Roosevelt

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the morning at religious services. Perhaps the idea was they would get further by praying than by any plan that the Stalinists had to offer.

Like so many Big-Businessmen, the Stalinists talk more about economic recovery than relief; the climax of the "Congress" is to be adoption, not of a fighting program for relief, but of a "resolution on economic recovery."

Not a word is being said by the W.A.A. leaders about the immediate problem confronting the nearly nine hundred thousand workers already fired from W.P.A. rolls by the Roosevelt administration.

Misery Described

The delegates themselves attested to the need for action when, during the Sunday afternoon session, they described the conditions in their home communities. One after another, they told of the misery and starvation existing in their home towns. Every delegate showed that the condition of the unemployed today is worse than it has ever been, and rapidly growing worse.

Yet, the majority of delegates followed the Stalinist line dutifully, no matter how it conflicted with their statements about the actual conditions at home. One, for example, called relief slanders "Hoover Republicans and Garner Democrats."

No one mentioned Roosevelt's leading role in slashing relief. Delegates from the deep South described not only miserable conditions of the unemployed, but the suppression of civil liberties, discrimination against Negroes, and the unflinching attitude of the local politicians. But that these politicians are part of Roosevelt's democratic machine was not once mentioned.

Respond to Militancy

Obedient to the Stalinist leaders though they were, these delegates responded with storms of applause whenever the slightest hint of militancy was uttered. When the delegate from Racine, Wisconsin, told the audience that "we come down here not to theorize but for action," the other delegates lustily applauded him.

Another burst of applause came when a delegate told how

Coughlin Hides a Boss Solution Behind Plea for Living Wage

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bosses' terms. It gives the boss a free hand in sweating the workers and slashing their salaries to boost his own unearned profits. Destruction of the trade unions is the usual fascist answer to decaying capitalism—preserve the profits of the bosses by reducing the living standards of the workers.

Contemptuous of W.P.A.

To the unemployed, the radio priest offers no more than he does to the worker. He speaks contemptuously of the W.P.A. worker as a dolester and of the W.P.A. as the "industry of dolesters." Coughlin has no concrete program for putting the jobless to work. Coughlin doesn't believe "that the government should support the people" (*Social Justice*, Mar. 20, 1939). That means no W.P.A., no home relief. There are some 15,000,000 unemployed in this country. They are not being absorbed in private industry. Coughlin would kick them off relief and fire the lucky few who still retain their W.P.A. jobs. He'd probably draft them for forced labor at no salary. Again, Coughlin talks the language of the Du

Ponts and the Morgans—not the language of the jobless.

Coughlin is vague as to how he would solve the problems of the youth. He has plenty of crocodile tears for them—but no program. Tears won't enable the youth to build for the future, marry, or become self-respecting and self-supporting citizens.

Vague on Plans

Coughlin is purposely vague in outlining his future plans. If he set down his real program in cold type, he would gain not one single adherent among the workers, employed or unemployed. His goal is the fascist state on the Italian style. Under this system, the worker has no rights, no hope, no future. He is tied to his job; must work the number of hours and at the kind of work he is told to work; in return he gets what the boss sees fit to pay him. He has no means of protest; but must accept in silence. Otherwise he goes to a concentration camp. Empty phrases, crocodile tears—but no constructive program. This is what Coughlin offers to the workers, the jobless and the youth.

In contrast, the Socialist Workers Party proposes a militant program of action. The S.W.P. says to the worker: You want a living annual wage. Good. You have a right to that wage, but no one is going to give it to you unless you fight for it. Your best weapon in that fight is your union. Build and defend your union. Strengthen the bonds of unity with all workers, regardless of creed, race, or nationality. Their problems are your problems. Together you can solve them. Disunited, you're licked before you start.

For Workers Action

When the bosses say they can't afford to pay a living wage, then let the workers take over industry and run it themselves. Elect shop committees. Demand the right to inspect the company's books. Force the cutting of the \$50,000 and \$100,000 salaries of the bosses. Form defense guards to protect your unions and your right to strike.

To the unemployed, the S.W.P. says: Demand jobs, and organize into unions to enforce your demands. Insist that W.P.A. be expanded, not curtailed. Demand \$30 for 30 hours a week. Demand a cessation of the squandering of billions of dollars for the coming boss

war and the diversion of this money into productive channels. All war funds to the unemployed. If private industry cannot hire the jobless, and the government cannot provide sufficient jobs for them, then force the opening of idle factories under workers' control.

To the youth, the S.W.P. says: The interests of the 'locked out generation' are identical with those of the worker and the jobless. Your future depends on an expanding economy. If the present economy is so senile that it cannot find a place for your talents, then that economy must be changed. The first step in bringing about that change is expropriation of America's Sixty Families.

Workers are not accustomed to having favors handed them on silver platters. Whatever they've gotten in the past, they've won through their own militancy. More militancy, more determination, more militant trade unions—this is the way to fight the lengthening depression and safeguard your right to a decent living.

East Side Branch Organizes Anti-Fascist Campaign

The Lower East Side Branch of the Socialist Workers Party, Local New York, is well on its way in the city-wide campaign to combat anti-semitism and fascism. Working from its local headquarters at 163 Norfolk Street, the branch has begun a series of open air meetings, held every Monday and Friday evening. The meetings are held at Norfolk and Delancey Streets, and Rivington and Clinton Streets.

Pointing out the menace of advancing fascism in the United States, the members of the branch are agitating among the workers of the East Side for the need of building a workers' defense guard as the only answer to the fascist threat.

In addition to the open air meetings, leaflets and literature distribution that the branch has planned, there will be regular meetings at the headquarters. All people who are interested in joining the campaign against anti-semitism and fascism are urged to get in touch with the local party headquarters.

A Round of Applause for The Yipsel Drama Group

Last Saturday night the New York Division of the Young People's Socialist League provided an audience that filled the Cultural Center with a real thrill. Faced with innumerable obstacles, the Y.P.S.L. Drama Group nevertheless put over a moving and dramatic presentation of Irwin Shaw's anti-war play "Bury the Dead" which left every one in the audience more than pleased at having come.

A few yards of drapery, a plank, and a corner of the Cultural Center were all they had for stage and set. Yet, they managed to convey the realism and horror of trench life. All but one or two had never before appeared in a stage. Yet, they made real and poignant the story of dead men risen against the horror of war. They were imperfectly rehearsed (they were able to sandwich in

only one or two rehearsals between other Yipsel activities), muffed lines here or there, were obviously nervous at their first attempt, yet they performed commendably.

Every member of the cast deserves a round of applause: Abe Hart, Stanley Jobs, Joe Brady, Henry Addis, Manny Wein, Martin Harvey, Arty Fox, Edith Shorr, Earl Coleman, Arlene Montauk, Saul Silverman, Sylvia Schwartz, Bert Bender, Connie Hammett. And an extra round of applause for the director, Martin Eden, and the technical staff, Bert Gerold and Bob Chester.

It is to be hoped that the Drama Group will now plan a series of performances in various parts of the city, and that they will be allowed more time to prepare the presentation of this and other plans. The Group has a great future before it.

On the Line... with Bill Morgan

One afternoon while waiting for the mail to come in a group of us are talking about the coming war which we agree will be conducted in the name of humanity and democracy so that the U. S. Steel Corp., will not perish from the earth, when one guy tells us a story about a friend of his who did not feel like dying for dear old Standard Oil in 1917.

It seems this guy was a conscientious objector and tried to avoid the draft by ducking in a closet or pretending like he never was born, and so of course he was soon snatched up by the government goon squads which patrolled the streets and made sudden raids on homes in the middle of the night.

When he is marched into the training camp, this bird tells the Generals he is unwilling to fight against people he has never even heard of or even seen. They throw him in the jug to wait for a trial where he will be charged with treason and suspicion of being an enemy spy, which is a joke because he had been a Sunday School teacher and a Boy Scout leader for eleven years back home in Davenport, Iowa, before anybody ever thought that the German people were only itching to slaughter the entire world with their bare hands.

This guy sits around in the cooler for two weeks waiting to be tried before a military jury, and all the while he is thinking how can he present his case in such a way as to make the soldiers see his point of view, and he has just about given up when a knock comes on the door and he is told he is about to receive sentence and will be obliged by standing up and facing the judge.

Gets Five Years

So they sentence him to five years of hard labor and assign him to a training camp for work but he is by this time of very little use to the army, because he is all the time running around picking up little pieces of paper and stuffing them in his pockets.

Every time he spots a discarded newspaper or an old cigarette package he rushes over to it and snatches it up like a demon and stows it away in his coat and soon all the soldiers make fun of him and deliberately litter up the grounds so as to make him run around all day collecting the papers, and everybody knows he is teched in the head and soon these develops a kinder attitude on the part of the soldiers and even some of the officers because it is a pitiful sight to see this poor fellow become so delirious over a mere scrap of old paper.

After this goes on for several months and they realize he is of no use to the army and has about as much future as a cake of ice, they call him in the office of the General and shoot a lot of questions at him which he either cannot answer or replies to so foolishly that they decide to discharge him, and tell him he can go home and forget all about the army.

Well, he thanks them and goes out. On his way across the big parade grounds there is a bunch of second lieutenants who have had great fun with our friend teasing the dickens out of him whenever they could and when they see him coming they throw a lot of scraps of paper all over the grounds and when he walks near they yell at him and say hey dumbbell, here is a nice new batch of papers to pick up but he pays no attention to them and proceeds

to walk right by without even so much as glancing at the papers.

This makes them a little peeved as you can imagine and they run after him and grab him by the arm and say what do you mean by not saluting the officers and what do you mean by not picking up all the papers when we tell you?

The Paper He Was Waiting for

The guy just looks at them and says, first of all, my friends, I am no longer in the army and you have no right to yell at me, and if you do I will inform the President of the United States and secondly, my very good friends, I am no longer interested in picking up little pieces of paper because I have at last found the one I am looking for, and with this he shows them the discharge paper which the Generals have given him.

Well, some of the group thought this was a pretty smart trick and that this fellow should be given a medal for outsmarting the government, but it was agreed upon by several of us that there ain't going to be no such tricks as that allowed this time and if workers do not want to get sucked into a fight in which they have nothing to gain except six feet of nice brown earth or a pair of crutches they will have to be a lot smarter than the bird in the story.

This time the bosses are all prepared and anyone who hopes to be excused from service in the gang which is to divvy up the world for the sole benefit of the U. S. Chamber of Commerce and the Generals will be thrown into the jug pronto and then tried for treason, the penalty for which is death.

No, trying to hide under the bed or hoping that the bosses will allow you to remain at home just because you are a conscientious objector will not mean a thing, because one guy here and another one there will be easy pickings for the special squads and the F.B.I. to locate and arrest. But if the trade unions and the other workers' organizations resist and demand peace and fight, we'll get somewhere.

You can bet your last shirt that if the workers sit down in the steel mills, the coal mines, the railroads and the clothing shops, the Generals would have a tough time trying to drag the youth of the country off to the slaughter.

The bosses would be very happy to isolate all the individuals who are against war and shoot them one by one in dark basements, but it is a horse of a different color when tens of thousands of workers decide to stay on a sit-down strike instead of shooting their class brothers somewhere in Europe.

The bosses do not fear the lone conscientious objector because he can be spotted at once—what the bosses fear is the united action of the working class, because only such action can put a crimp into the war plans.

So if you know anybody who does not want to fight for the profits of the 60 Families, tip him off to this little idea, because otherwise he will be snatched before he has a chance to even make a statement. Tell him that his place is in the ranks of the working class and that there is a real job to be done if the war is to be stopped, and it can and will be stopped when the workers as a class decide to clamp down on the bosses and their stooges—the Generals. Peace will come about then and only then.

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