

By Dwight Macdonald

SPARKS IN THE NEWS

Automotive Progress—in Reverse

The twenty-first edition of "Automobile Facts and Figures" was recently issued by the Automobile Manufacturers Association. It is an enthusiastic volume, full of big figures: last year motorists paid one out of every eight tax dollars, their total tax bill coming to \$1,529,312,125... total cars registered were 27,628,879... the industry was the nation's No. 1 consumer of steel, rubber, plate glass, nickel, lead and mohair... it accounted for the direct and indirect employment of 6,380,000 workers, or one-seventh of all persons gainfully employed last year... and so on... and so on.

There was one rather interesting fact about this "surging giant of production", as the N.Y. Times called it editorially, which somehow didn't get into the book. It may be found in a recent report of the National Association of Sales Finance Companies, and it is that last year more automobiles, both new and used, were repossessed because of failure to keep up payments than in any year in the history of the industry. Almost 20% of all used cars sold were repossessed (next highest peak was 13% in 1932) and almost 7% of all new cars (the 1932 peak being slightly less than 6%).

"It is somewhat astonishing," comments the Cleveland Trust Company's Bulletin, "to find that the increase in repossessions resulting from the sudden business relapse which began late in 1937 was considerably more serious than that at the bottom of the great depression in 1932." A serious crack seems to be developing in the imposing facade of the automobile industry—one of many such cracks which have become increasingly evident in the structure of American capitalism since the 1937 collapse.

Weather Report

Those who follow the whimsically humorous weather reports which are printed on the first page of the N. Y. World-Telegram every evening must have been startled to read the report for July 29 last: "The winds today are taking a middle of the road position. They are moderate and southerly. The temperature is far from subversive—a good substantial, sound money, 85 degrees at most. But the humidity is sheer Trotskyism—insidious, crafty, boring from within and without." The friend who called this to my attention adds that the report appeared this way in the home edition, but that in later editions the reference to Trotskyism was deleted. He suggests that the term is coming to have the same significance for the bourgeoisie that "Communism" had before the C.P. went respectable. I hope he's right.

Spain: Work in Progress

As might have been expected, the victory of Franco is bringing into being a Fascist regime of so extreme a type as to be almost

a burlesque on even Italy and Germany. The complete crushing in the Civil War of all resistance from the masses and the backward nature of the Spanish economy and ruling class made this result easily predictable. But the lengths to which things have gone is still a little surprising. From the press I glean a few of the more startling recent disclosures:

Item: Every family must get an official budget book and must record therein "with the greatest honesty and scrupulousness" all receipts and expenditures. These books will be periodically inspected by the Ministry of Labor "to determine the actual necessities of the home," that is, to see how low the wage scale may be safely fixed.

Item: At San Sebastian, swank bathing place, women's bathing suits must carry knee-length skirts and have tops that reach the neck and men bathers must wear tops. Fine for violations: \$18.

Item: Maids in the houses of Madrid noblemen now get \$4.60 a month. This correspondent adds: "You can tell the maids from the aristocrats on the streets because the maids are not allowed to wear hats."

Item: The Ministry of the Interior has organized a large crop of censors to survey all past productions of Spanish art, literature and music and to "eliminate" any works they consider "injurious to the interests of Spain." A staff of "several thousand" functionaries censor every letter sent or received and all phone calls. All Spaniards must report to the Ministry the presence in homes or shops of any books of "unfriendly character."

Item: Women are strictly forbidden to lie down on Spanish beaches.

Item: On July 30, General Franco decreed that all Spanish men between the ages of 18 and 50 must work fifteen days each year for the State without pay. This return to the medieval corvée has been ventured in no other Fascist nation so far; even Hitler pays the unemployed youth who work on the farms something, and they get their board and keep besides. But, as Franco eloquently put it in a recent speech: "Work, being a social duty, will be universally demanded in some form or other of all Spaniards who are not crippled, as it must be deemed a tribute that all must pay to the wealth of the country."

The most interesting item of all, however, is that on August 7 the New Deal administration, which so shocked and pained its admirers by its prompt diplomatic recognition of the Franco regime, took steps to show its friendliness for its sister democracy in more substantial form. The Export-Import Bank, chief organ of the Administration's dollar diplomacy, announced it was extending \$13,750,000 in credits to Nationalist Spain to make it possible for it to buy American cotton. The editorial moaning and wailing of the Nation and the New Republic can be imagined!

MEN AND WOMEN OF LABOR

OUT OF THE PAST

By EMANUEL GARRETT

SACCO AND VANZETTI

(Executed August 23, 1927)

Nicola Sacco (born in Italy, April 22, 1891) was a shoemaker. For years he worked in a Milford, Mass., shoe factory as a skilled edger. Bartolomeo Vanzetti (born in Italy, June 11, 1888) was a worker who had tried his hands at many trades. For years he peddled fish in Plymouth, Mass. Sacco and Vanzetti were no different from any other worker—except in one thing. Sacco and Vanzetti were anarchists. They hated tyranny and oppression. They dreamed of a society in which man would be free. They paid for that crime with their lives.

The year 1920 was the year of the Palmer raids, of the post-war hysteria. On April 20th of that year a paymaster was held up and killed in Braintree, Mass. Sacco and Vanzetti were nowhere near the scene of the killing. There wasn't a shred of tangible evidence to connect them with the crime. But they were anarchists—and so they were arrested and tried before a judge (Webster Thayer) who publicly bragged that he'd burn the damn anarchists. Sacco and Vanzetti were found guilty and sentenced to death. The Massachusetts courts chucked up another triumph for boss justice.

A Seven-Year Fight

Appeals, mass action stayed execution of the sentence for seven years. During those years, the wave of protest swelled higher as added evidence confirmed their innocence, pointed the guilt in fact at a gang of professional thieves. From Shanghai to Boston workers demonstrated. Bourgeois liberals (Felix Frankfurter and others) declared the trial a frame-up. In Paris, barricades were erected. A real united front of labor fought for the release of Sacco and Vanzetti. Union Square was many times packed as labor leaders of differing political viewpoints, James P. Cannon, Carlo Tresca, etc., demanded freedom for Sacco and Vanzetti.

But an "impartial" investigating committee of prominent "liberals" appointed by Governor Fuller "weighed" the evidence, ignored all the facts clearing Sacco and Vanzetti and proving the case a frame-up and confirmed their "guilt". Massachusetts justice had to have its toll. Sacco and Vanzetti had to die. That they did—with the cry "Long live anarchy!" on their lips.

How better recite the lives of those two great martyrs than in the unmatched words of one of them, Vanzetti, from his address to the court before sentence was pronounced, and from his final statement to the court: "Everybody that knows these two arms knows very well that I do not need to go into the streets and kill a man to take money. I can live by my two hands and live well. But besides that, I can live even without work with my hands for other people. I have had plenty of chance to live independently and to live what the world conceives to be a higher life than to gain our bread with the sweat of our brow.

"My father in Italy is in good condition. I could have come back in Italy and he would have welcomed me every time with open arms. Even if I come back with not a cent in my pocket, my father could have given me a position, not to work but to make business, or to oversee upon the land that he owns....

"Now, I should say that I am not only innocent of all these things, not only have I never committed a real crime in my life—though some sins but not crimes—not only have I struggled all my life to eliminate crimes, the crimes that the official and the moral law condemns, but also the crime that the moral law and the official law sanction and sanctify—the exploitation of man by the man, and if there is a reason why I am here as a guilty man, if there is a reason why you in a few minutes can doom me, it is this reason and none else....

"Our Career and Our Triumph"

"I have talk a great deal of myself but I even forgot to name Sacco. Sacco too is a worker from his boyhood, a skilled worker lover of work, with a good job and pay, a bank account, a good and lovely wife, two beautiful children, and a neat little home at the verge of a wood, near a brook. Sacco is a heart, a faith, a character, a man; a man lover of nature and of mankind. A man who gave all, who sacrifice all to the cause of Liberty and to his love for mankind; money, rest, mundane ambitions, his own wife, his children, himself and his own life. Sacco has never dreamt to steal, never to assassinate. He and I have never brought a morsel of bread to our mouths, from our childhood to today—which has not been gained by the sweat of our brows. Never. His people also are in good position and of good reputation.

"Oh, yes, I may be more witty, as some have put it, I am a better babler than he is, but many, many times in hearing his heartfelt voice ringing a faith sublime, in considering his supreme sacrifice, remembering his heroism I felt small small at the presence of his greatness and found myself compelled to fight back from my eyes the tears, and quench my heart throbbing to my throat to not weep before him—this man called thief and assassin and doomed. But Sacco's name will live in the hearts of the people and in their gratitude when Katzman's and your bones will be dispersed by time, when your name, his name, your law, institutions, and your false god are but a dim remembering of a cursed past in which man was wolf to the man."

"If it had not been for this thing, I might have lived out my life talking at street corners to scolding men, I might have died, unmarked, unknown, a failure. Now we are not a failure. This is our career, and our triumph. Never in our full life could we hope to do such work for tolerance, for justice, for man's understanding as now we do by accident. Our words—our lives—pains—nothing! The taking of our lives—lives of a good shoemaker and a poor fish-peddler—all! That last moment belongs to us—that agony is our triumph.

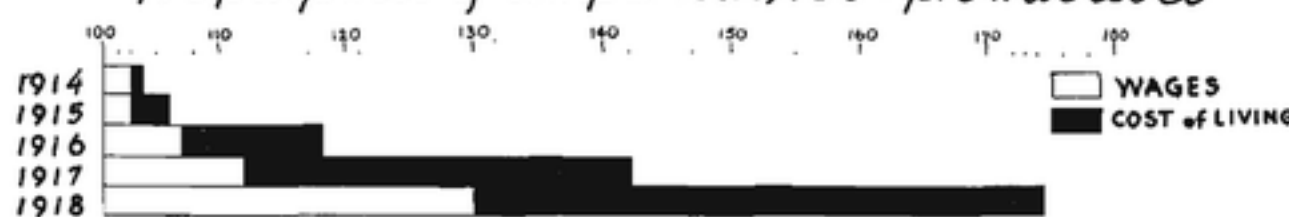
Who Won the World War?

This Is What the War Meant for the Workers!

COST OF LIVING Skyrockets =

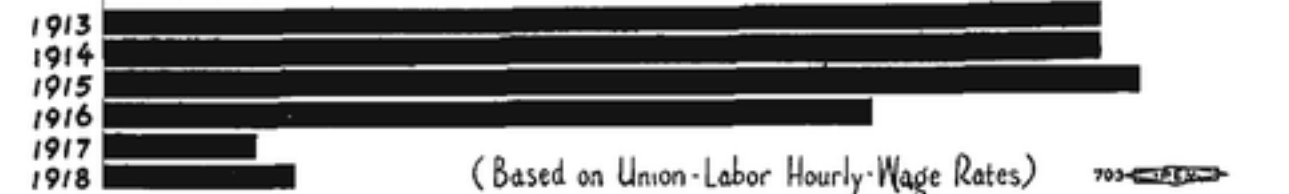
WAGES LAG FAR BEHIND

—For purposes of comparison, 100 = pre-war level—



RESULT: "REAL WAGES" GO DOWN

("Real Wages" = the amount that one's paycheck can buy)



(Based on Union-Labor Hourly Wage Rates)

(U. S. Labor Dept. statistics)

WORKERS' FORUM

APPRECIATES MORGAN COLUMN ON YPSL CAMP

Dear Comrade Editor:

I want to express my appreciation of Bill Morgan's column describing the California Y.P.S.L. camp. It was the sort of article which renews one's faith in the ability of our movement to fight against all odds until victory will be achieved. Bill caught the spirit which filled the California camp and other Y.P.S.L. camps—the spirit of fight and study and enthusiasm and sacrifice.

(May I suggest that you change the manner of printing his articles? They would be much more attractive if you give them special feature headlines based on the material in each article, instead of burying each piece under the dull and unsuggestive column-head "On the Line"?)

I also want to officially invite the Appeal to send up a reporter to the New York Y.P.S.L. camp which is opening this week, especially to the training school which we will have on the week of August 25 and which will end in a grand jamboree. If you think California Y.P.S.L.'s run a good camp, you ain't seen nothing till you come to the New York camp.

Fraternally, IRVING HOWE.

A BIT OF TRUE COMPANY UNIFORM

Dear comrades:

I know this news is somewhat late, but inasmuch as a letter from Herbert Legg, WPA Administrator of Southern California, commending the Workers Alliance for its "cooperative spirit" has just been posted on our project bulletin board I want to tell you what happened here in connection with the WPA strike.

After many attempts and much effort on the part of the militants on the Writers and Historical Records projects to call a strike we had to give up the idea because the Stalinists who have the majority voted against such action.

The Stalinists called instead a 2-hour work stoppage to protest peacefully the 130-hour law. The workers were to walk out just two and a half hours before quitting time and assemble quietly in front of the building—along the curb so not to block the entrance to the building. No picket lines, no demonstration. Just one happy family jolling around the building, eating candy, drinking soda-pop.

We tried to turn this get-together into some sort of militant protest, with our own placards etc. But Lo' and Behold! When the Stalinists saw the placard which read "Repress Government Strike - breaking acts" they became exceedingly indignant and isolated us. They held a short meeting and dis-banded.

Fraternally, Y.P.

Comrade Y. enclosed Legg's letter which was addressed to the job stewardess of the local on the Historical Records Survey. It reads:

"I wish to acknowledge receipt of your letter of July 21st,

CAMP 3L

Near Brewster, New York
A country estate of the bourgeoisie rented for the Y.P.S.L. Bathing, sport, ping-pong, badminton, and a good time.
Campfires, singing, dancing.

Rates:

Employed \$14

Unemployed \$8

Get all information at
YPSL OFFICE
116 University Pl., N.Y.

S.W.P. CALLS GIANT ANTI-FASCIST RALLY

(Continued from Page 1)

with copies to Earl Browder and the Daily Worker:

"Still time for united front action against fascist-Bund provocation," said the telegram. "Strongly urge you join in anti-fascist demonstration in Union Square Saturday. Coughlinite threat to invade traditional labor center characterized as 'brazenly provocative in the manner of their fascist forebears abroad' even by Herald Tribune in editorial today. Your Daily Worker editorial correctly states today 'they must be fought boldly and without hesitation.' Call for determined mass protest Saturday has already caused Coughlin to issue formal 'repudiation' and made police take action against Coughlinite violence in Bronx yesterday. Only way to prevent fascists from criminal outbreaks is mobilization of hundreds of thousands not sometime in future but this Saturday. To this end fascist threat must be faced by one solid labor front."

Edward R. Frank, New York organizer of the Socialist Workers Party, said:

"Despite our sharp and deep-going political differences with the Communist Party, we shall bend every effort to achieve prompt joint action against the common Fascist foe."

WPA WAGE CUTS TAKE EFFECT SEPT.

(Continued from Page 1)

New York Times, August 17, as designed to drive down the general wage-standards of all workers. "We must retain a differential in favor of private industry in order to make it more attractive than relief. The effect of the new wage scale will tend to do that in the larger cities of the North and East," said the Times.

This latest attack on WPA workers, like the previous ones, results from the cut of almost a billion dollars from the relief budget and transference of that amount to the war budget and transference of that amount to the war budget, which was President Roosevelt's recommendation to Congress in his April 27 relief budget message.

SEPTEMBER NEW INTERNATIONAL FEATURES SITUATION IN WPA

The forthcoming issue of the New International, which will go to press shortly, will contain the following important analyses of national and international problems:

- (1) Twenty-Five Million of Us, by Argus. A critical analysis of the WPA, what it has achieved and what it has failed to achieve; what it has meant to the millions of unemployed in the United States. Illustrated with a series of graphs compiled by the author.
- (2) The Situation in Ceylon, by Sherman Stanley.
- (3) Latest Developments in India.
- (4) The PSOP and Trotskyism, by Leon Trotsky. A sequel to the exchange of letters between Leon Trotsky and Daniel Guerin and Marceau Pivert.
- (5) Continuation of the article on French politics by

THE NEGRO QUESTION

By J. R. JOHNSON

The American Negro and the Proletarian Revolution

"The Negroes are designated by their whole historical past to be, under adequate leadership, the very vanguard of the proletarian revolution."—from "Resolution on Negro Work" adopted by the Socialist Workers Party convention July 1-5, 1939.

It is going to be one of the high peaks in the history of the American revolutionary movement, this decision of our recent convention.

There is, in the sentence quoted, an overstatement, in my opinion. It would be more correct to say, "in the very vanguard." But the place of the Negroes is in the very front. This is the truth that must be burnt into the consciousness of every party member before the party can successfully approach the Negro question. When we have absorbed this, we shall know how to approach the Negro.

It is the masses of the underprivileged, the disinherited, who are least corrupted by the prevailing ideas of a society. They, in the mass, are the readiest to fight most desperately for the overthrow of any social system.

Example of French Revolution

The Paris masses were the battering ram of the French Revolution: the Sansculottes, i.e., the people without shoes. In that manual of revolutionary theory and practice, the History of the Russian Revolution, Trotsky describes the entry of these downtrodden masses on the historical stage of the French Revolution. (p. 210):

"But before it comes to war and the guillotine, the Paris Commune enters the scene—supported by the lowest city layers of the Third Estate—and with increasing boldness contests the power with the official representatives of the national bourgeoisie. A new double sovereignty is thus inaugurated, the first manifestation of which we observe as early as 1790, when the big and medium bourgeoisie is still firmly seated in the administration and in the municipalities. How striking is the picture—and how vilely it has been slandered!—of the efforts of the plebeian levels to raise themselves up out of the social cellars and catacombs, and stand forth in that forbidden arena where people in wigs and silk breeches are settling the fate of the nation. It seemed as though the very foundation of society, trampled underfoot by the cultured bourgeoisie, was stirring and coming to life. Human heads lifted themselves above the solid mass, horny hands stretched aloft, hoarse but courageous voices shouted. The districts of Paris, bastards of the revolution, began to live a life of their own. They were recognized—it was impossible not to recognize them!—and transformed into sections. But they kept continually breaking the boundaries of legality and receiving a current of fresh blood from below, opening their ranks in spite of the law to those with no rights, the destitute Sansculottes. At the same time, the rural municipalities were becoming a screen for a peasant uprising against that bourgeois legality which was defending the feudal property system. Thus from under a second nation arises a third."

These were the millions who poured into the French Trade Unions between June and August 1936 at the rate of 40,000 a day. These are the masses who will rally around the more conservative organizations of the more privileged workers and vitalize them for the proletarian revolution.

Revolutionary History of American Negroes

And in America, "under adequate leadership", the Negroes will come en masse to the revolutionary struggle.

Of the fifteen million of them in America today, barring a thin crust of petty-bourgeois capitalists, intellectuals, and well-paid domestic attendants of the American bourgeoisie, the large majority of Negroes will fight for a new society with a vigor and endurance that will be surpassed by no other section of the American workers or farmers.

Their ancestors did it. Lincoln doubted that the North could have won without the 220,000 Negroes in the Northern Army and the support of the slave population. How the black soldiers fought! "It would have been madness to attempt, with the bravest white troops, what I have successfully accomplished with the black ones." This is the testimony of Colonel Higginson, and there are a score of similar appraisals. This bravery and endurance can be counted on, from any people who for centuries have experienced every variety of oppression and at last see a way out.

Such was, or should have been, generally known at least by Marxists. But it is only within the last few years that research has begun to find and make known the revolutionary hostility against the old slave-owners which characterized the ex-slaves after the Civil War. Fear of a servile insurrection hung like a thunder-cloud over the defeated plantation magnates in the years that followed their defeat. With the slightest encouragement from any political party in the North, the blacks in the South would have carried the revolution to a conclusion, wiping out every vestige of the plantation system and with it the theory and practise of white supremacy.

Negro Not Deceived by "Democracy"

Today the lives of over 90% of the Negroes in this country offer no soil in which illusions about bourgeois democracy can flourish. The Negroes have no need to dream dreams and see visions of a new society. It is always before them—to be able to live as white America lives. But that desire, modest as it is, they will never get under capitalism. The majority do not understand their position in these terms. But the thinking ones know that they will win their emancipation only by merciless struggle against their masters. What terrorizes them is that they see as their enemies all white America, white workers and all. When the white workers realize, as Lincoln realized, that their emancipation is impossible without the Negroes, they will look for them and find them as Lincoln did. They are doing it already, as witness the hundreds of thousands of Negroes in the CIO. The revolutionary party seeks to accelerate that process.

American Marxists Have Underestimated The Negroes

What Lincoln learned by experience, we of the revolutionary vanguard should know by analysis. Yet, even when it was a revolutionary party, the Communist Party took ten years to address itself seriously to the Negro question, and then only by the vigorous intervention of the Communist International. The S.W.P. has followed an identical course—ten years of neglect and then an impulse to action from our international movement. This is not in the faintest degree accidental, and any superficial explanations would be a dangerous sophistry. It is due in part to the influence of that chauvinism which is characteristic of American bourgeois society and which is present even in a movement as advanced as ours. Marxists are not exempt from the laws of history and can combat a prevailing prejudice in all its aspects only by conscious and strenuous thought and action continuously renewed. This is not a matter of personal relationships between whites and Negroes in a party, important though that is. There is a certain number of non-revolutionary Americans who maintain quite liberal personal relationships with those Negroes whom they know. Yet they are permeated with chauvinism. We shall have to probe this question to its depths.

When as a party we realize how pervasive and subtle, even among revolutionaries, is the chauvinism fostered by American capitalism, then and then only shall we be in a position to tear it out by the roots and begin to win the Negro for the revolution. But the first requisite for this is to tear out of our minds the false conceptions of Negroes which we have unconsciously taken over from American capitalism. To see the Negro as being in the very vanguard of a great international political movement is to do him justice for the first time in American political thinking. It is from there that the Fourth International begins.