

THE NEGRO QUESTION

By J. R. JOHNSON

Negroes in Steel (Continued)

Let us continue with our examination of the Negro in the steel industry, as portrayed by Cayton and Mitchell in their book, *Black Workers and the New Unions*.

The Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers for years did practically nothing to organize the Negroes—or for that matter, anybody else. The union officials passed resolutions and talked about accepting Negro workers as well as whites, but they did nothing to bring numbers of Negroes into the union, even after the passage of the National Industrial Relations Act. The union continued its policy of equality in words and segregation in action.

But among the new unions formed after the NRA, there was a new spirit, and officers and members went after Negroes, recognizing that without them it was impossible to win victories against the bosses. Wherever the proportion of Negroes in the plant was large the workers made a determined drive. An interview with a worker in McKeesport, Penna., shows in a few words the role of the Negro in steel:

"Negroes must be organized here if the union is to have any show at all; it would be impossible to ignore them completely because of their great numbers, especially since difficulties have been experienced in bringing in the highly skilled American workers."

Outstretched Hand Not Enough

But the Negro has behind him three hundred years of deception and exploitation by whites. Many whites make the mistake of thinking that as soon as they go with an outstretched hand to the Negro he will forget everything and accept it. It is not so easy. Many of the white workers found that they had to make a special effort to get Negroes in. One of the most frequent methods adopted was to get Negro speakers to address meetings. And certain lodges elected Negroes to offices in the unions, so as to give practical proof that the equality of which they spoke was more than verbal bait for the Negroes. In Homestead, Penna., the financial secretary of Spirit of 1892 Lodge No. 172 tells of the great success that follows the election of Negroes to office:

"... Then the rest of them came in droves. They are a clanish bunch, passing word of all such developments around among themselves. Each man brings his friends, and the next meeting the friend brings other friends, until enormous numbers of them attend in force."

The two areas where most Negroes fled into the union were Pittsburgh and Birmingham, one in the heart of the industrial district of the Northeast and the other in the backward South. This shows us once more a lesson that we must never forget, that in the last analysis it is economic relations which are decisive in politics.

No Racial Question in Profits

The economic relation is decisive in politics. The capitalist does not allow race prejudice to interrupt his profits. When union activities became threatening, the owners in one factory tried a novel way of splitting the workers. Previously Negroes were not allowed to work the open hearth or as first helpers, but were kept as second or third helpers. To divide the working class, the company promoted several Negroes to first helpers, the most aristocratic, skilled, and well paid job in the whole mill. This had a double effect. Those Negroes who got the job would have nothing whatever to do with the union. And the other Negroes in the shop felt that at last promotion was open to them and they therefore became much cooler to union organization.

The white workers were now paying for their previous neglect of and discrimination against the Negroes. We shall see more of this in the future. But in any serious competition, on a large scale, between the workers and the bosses, the great majority of Negro workers—99 percent of them—will find their places beside their white brothers. Economic relations, though not the whole story, are the most important part of the story.

Many of the Negro workers are sympathetic to the union. They know that they will get little from the company, but what they fear is that in the event of a closed shop the white workers might discriminate against them. This has happened in many unions and nothing but the most vigilant honesty and fair play on the part of the white workers can break down this justified distrust. Yet despite these difficulties, the unions were able to attract and to hold Negroes.

Equality Begins Among Workers

An important part of this work is the election of Negro officers. In nearly every important lodge in the Pittsburgh area this has taken place. First of all the lodges began by electing Negroes to office simply in order to attract other Negroes. Later, as more Negroes came into the union, these voted for additional colored officers. And finally all the workers, white and black, recognized the capabilities of certain among the Negro officials and voted for them without regard for the color of their skin. In Clairton, Penna., for instance, according to an interview,

"There were more colored than white elected to office. Here in Clairton there are about ten whites to one colored person. When the nomination came off, they nominated whom they wanted. We wanted to put up as many Negroes as we could. We voted by secret ballot. They had a colored man and a white man watching the ballot box. Six colored were nominated and of these, four were elected. Mr. M. was elected corresponding representative, J.E. financial secretary, M.R. trustee, and J.R. another trustee."

When the Negro sees that he can make his influence felt and can elect some of his race to office, he can more easily turn his back on the bosses. It is in this way that the great battle for equality not only on the economic but on the political and social field will be won.

The Homestead, Penna., lodge, according to one of its officers, "... held a couple of bingo games and a dance, all of which Negroes attended in force with their ladies. At the dance, held in the lower section of the city near the Negro district, there were no restrictions. Dancing was mixed racially and sexually, whites with Negro partners. I danced with a Negro girl myself. Negroes enjoyed themselves immensely and there was no kicks from the whites. This lodge will soon have a picnic which will also be mixed."

There are many such successful attempts, despite some failures. This attempt of the workers to get together, naturally suffers from the tremendous pressure to which they are subjected by the race prejudices of a bourgeois society. But it is here that the battle for racial equality must be fought, and it is here that it can be won. Not in dances in Greenwich Village, or by bourgeois hosts and hostesses who invite intelligent Negroes to their houses for dinner in order to show that they are enlightened and above the vulgar prejudices of capitalist society. Some of these people mean well; some of them do not. But their activities, their parties and lunches, are a mere drop in the ocean. They are not important. Black and white workers struggling together for socialism will bring equality, and nothing else will.

Hands Off the Trade Unions, Mr. Roosevelt

(Continued from Page 1)

(pot Dome) Daugherty used it to secure the injunction which smashed the railway shopmen's strike of 1922. Every weakened liberal, in Congress and in the legal profession, admits that the Sherman Act's use against labor is a flagrant anti-labor weapon.

Sherman Act Dragged Out Again

One sure sign of the growth of reaction is the reappearance of the Sherman Act as an active weapon against labor. That sign came in April of this year—the Apex hosiery case—when a Federal judge fined the hosiery workers union three-quarters of a million dollars under this law for a sit-down strike. And since then, an even surer sign, has been the return to this weapon by the government itself—unprecedented since Daugherty used it against the railway shopmen in 1922.

The "five types of union activity" which the Department of Justice letter outlaws under the Sherman Act read as if they were very specific and, on their face, unjustifiable union practices—until we examine them and discover that they are in reality blanket rules being established against labor.

Take one of these "types," jurisdictional strikes. To make it sound good, Arnold's letter points out that the AFL has condemned jurisdictional strikes. It is true that the AFL has moved to put an end to the jurisdictional strikes between building trades unions, and every progressive unionist is opposed to such conflicts between bona-fide unions.

But many a time an anti-labor employer, unable to fight a union head-on, resorts to the device of evading the union's demands by forcing the workers into a fake or impotent union. Sometimes CIO or AFL officials help bosses put this over. We have only to recall the notorious examples of the AFL giving a charter to the "blue card" company union in the tri-state lead fields, so that thereafter the unionization fight of the CIO smelter workers was, formally, a jurisdictional strike against the AFL "union"; or when the AFL chartered Organic's "Progressive Miners" to fight the United Mine Workers. A particularly flagrant example of the CIO descending to this level is a CIO Stalinist-controlled "oil workers" local in Minneapolis and St. Paul, which will work with any boss against the legitimate locals in the field, affiliated to the Teamsters' Union.

Under the ruling of the Department of Justice, any time any stooge local connives with a boss to prevent real unionization, the real union, if it fights back, is liable to prosecution under the Sherman Act. So much for one of the specific "types of union activity" outlawed by the Department of Justice. We could similarly analyze the other four to show that they are equally vicious.

The Aim Is Wage Cuts

But that isn't all. In addition to the five specific examples, the Department of Justice makes two blanket prohibitions. Unions, it declares, "may not act as a private police force to perpetuate unnecessarily costly and uneconomic practices in the housing industry." And, furthermore, "preventing improved methods of production" is another "labor activity which goes beyond any legitimate labor purpose."

Just what Thurman Arnold means in outlawing "unnecessarily costly and uneconomic practices in the housing industry" will be understood if we recall what this same Assistant Attorney General told the Temporary National Economic Committee on July 7 in a speech announcing that the Department of Justice was shortly to investigate the construction industry.

It was a tirade against the labor unions in the construction industry. Tucked away in it was one paragraph which admitted that "unlawful restraints" (by labor) are not the only sources of high construction costs. "Credit facilities offer one of the outstanding means of reducing ultimate costs. Land values are often high. Remedies . . . however [for these ills] are not within the scope of this report." And having thus dismissed the real reasons for high costs of housing, Arnold went after the labor movement:

"We can say to labor, 'You can get the same thing the heavy industries are getting: a greater annual income, based on having more work to do during the year, without need to stretch the hours of work and the rate of pay on each particular job.'" (N.Y. Times, July 8, 1939)

Surrender your union wage rates and submit to a speed-up, in return for an unguaranteed—and unguaranteeable—promise of more work per year—this is the Department of Justice's openly avowed program for the construction industry, backed up by the G-men, frameup trials and the Sherman Anti-Trust Act. That's what Arnold now means by outlawing "unnecessarily costly and uneconomic practices in the construction industry."

G-Men Supplement Sherman Act

Nor is this all. The Sherman Act, even by the most difficult stretching, is an insufficient basis for all the prosecutions which the Department of Justice is now conducting against the labor movement.

The FBI has just railroaded convictions against seven teamsters' union leaders of Des Moines, Sioux City and Omaha. The original charge was one for the local police courts: that fifteen months previously a truck had been allegedly damaged during a Sioux City bakery strike. As a matter of fact, the charge was forgotten as soon as the minor strike was settled. But the Sioux City local was part of that magnificent North Central Area Drivers' Council which is the brightest spot in the American labor movement today, having brought a twelve-state area under a uniform contract for 350,000 over-road drivers and helpers. So that forgotten police court case was picked up by the G-

Riveting War Chains on Labor

The CIO and the Third Term

By GEORGE CLARKE

The New York and New Jersey State CIO conventions meeting last weekend adopted unanimous resolutions favoring a third term for President Roosevelt. Exactly one month was required for the top CIO leadership to clarify its non-committal position at the San Francisco convention and to jump on the Roosevelt bandwagon in double-quick time.

There is little doubt that an attitude of open hostility on the part of John L. Lewis to the third-term campaign would have made the passing of these resolutions at the state conventions difficult if not impossible. What happened in the month to give Lewis a change of heart is not known. The deal that Lewis made with Roosevelt—trading CIO support to the president in return for miserly concessions in war-time—has remained the property of secret conferences. All we know is that in the disagreement in CIO top circles on the third-term, Hillman's point of view appears to have prevailed.

Whatever happened in the secret conclaves with Roosevelt—certainly nothing of benefit to the labor movement—there is not the slightest plausible reason for the trade unions to back Roosevelt in 1941. This is said entirely aside from the general proposition that labor commits hara-kiri every time it supports a capitalist candidate. Specifically, Roosevelt's record in the past year has been viciously anti-labor.

ROOSEVELT ATTACKS THE LABOR MOVEMENT

The heaviest blows the labor movement received in the past year came from Washington. In a single shove, a million workers were flung off the WPA rolls at the command of Roosevelt. In his own words: "We must and shall finish with this business of relief." With his blessing, the Woodrum Bill drove an axe into all WPA standards by equalizing the differential between North and South, and slashed at union wage standards by increasing the monthly hours to 130 at the same rate of pay. It was a gentle hint to private industrialists to chop down the wage scales of skilled workers.

When a half a million workers rose in strike action throughout the country against the starvation, union-busting decree, Frank Murphy, Roosevelt's Attorney General, made the Hitlerite pronouncement: "You can't strike against the government!" When they did nevertheless strike against the government,

men, who put any amount of money and men over a fifteen-month period into cooking up a frameup against seven of the teamsters' union leaders.

Nor could the Sherman Act, with any amount of stretching, cover the dirtiest job of all which the G-men are now carrying out—in Minneapolis. As part of the nation-wide strike of WPA workers, the Minneapolis labor movement called out the projects. Because the Minneapolis AFL unions are progressive enough to understand the need for unity between employed and unemployed, and the unemployed and WPA workers there were a recognized section of the union movement, the WPA strike there was more effective than elsewhere. In addition, the Minneapolis labor movement has been in the vanguard of labor's advances since 1934 and its militant policies have inspired successful union campaigns throughout the country.

For all these "crimes" the G-men were dispatched to Minneapolis. During the WPA strike they disguised themselves as strikers and went on the picket lines—what dirty work they did there is yet to be unearthed, but it is clear they performed the malodorous role of agents-provocateurs. Then they worked for months cooking up a case against the strikers. They have so far succeeded in railroadng convictions against eight defendants; the third trial, involving 25 WPA workers, is now on, and a total of 150 have been indicted.

In the Minneapolis persecutions, the FBI stands revealed in all its foul viciousness. For here they are not dealing with those non-existent figures, the "well-paid" aristocrats of the building trades, but with half-starved WPA and unemployed workers. There's the War Deal of the Roosevelt government in all its nasty nakedness!

During the First World War and the post-war years, the FBI was an anti-labor political police, carrying out the Palmer Red Raids, systematic strike-breaking and snooping against the unions. All that was done away with after 1924, under Attorney General Harlan Stone—or so they said. Labor was given a solemn promise that the FBI would not be employed on prosecutions against the labor movement.

That promise, it is now as plain as day, has been broken. The FBI, as Brother Smith of the Omaha Drivers has put it, is being turned into an anti-labor political police.

The first step in fighting this development is for organized labor to understand that this development has occurred. The facts outlined above must be tirelessly explained over and over again in every union hall in the country, in every union paper. When organized labor realizes what has happened, the ways and means of smashing the government's union-busting campaign will be easy enough to work out and carry through.

Roosevelt's WPA administration fired the WPA strikers for remaining away from work five days. In Minneapolis, where a powerful labor movement stirred such quick strikebreaking, the G-men were turned loose on the workers as agent provocateurs. The frameup trials and convictions of WPA workers in that city on the charge of "conspiracy" is the direct work of Roosevelt's Department of Justice. The vicious onslaught now being carried on by the G-men against the teamsters movement of the Midwest is part and parcel of Roosevelt's anti-labor drive, as are the Department of Justice's prosecutions of building trades unions throughout the country.

In the same period the personnel of the National Labor Relations Board was transformed to meet the demands of the National Manufacturers Ass'n and the Chamber of Commerce. So utterly hostile to labor's interests is this new Labor Board that the CIO national convention advised its affiliates to go before the labor board as little as possible. It was Roosevelt who engineered this change in the labor board.

ROOSEVELT PREPARES FOR DICTATORSHIP OVER LABOR Side by side with these overt actions against labor came measures more subtle but even more inimical to the trade unions. Billions of dollars were appropriated for the super-armoraments program for America's imperialist intervention in the war. Roosevelt's War Department staff worked out the last details for the military strait-jacket to be tightened around the unions when he openly enters the war. In the commanding position of the M-Day dictatorship over labor were seated its worst enemies, appointed by Roosevelt: three lieutenants of the firm of J. P. Morgan and the fourth a scion of another of the Sixty Families.

In face of Roosevelt's record, the support tendered him by the New York and New Jersey CIO bodies can be characterized as a monstrous betrayal of the interests of labor, callous and scornful in its disregard of the rank and file workers of the CIO unions. The leadership of the CIO is riveting the chains of a reactionary War Deal administration around the ankles of the workers. And by this fact, it is in advance committing the American unions to supporting Wall Street's imperialist war. By this action, the CIO leaders become a partner to

any official of the American government should never attempt to drive the American people into war. We are against war." Potash spoke in a similar vein. How can anyone say he is against war, and support the "president's record only up until now"? "Up until now" the president has made his biggest strides towards plunging the US into the war. "Up until now" a five billion dollar armament program has been passed. "Up until now" the United States has been turned into an army for the Allies under the new Neutrality Law. "Up until now" the president's public declarations on the war have been indistinguishable from those of the belligerents. "Up until now" the President has used the Department of Justice and the FBI as a political police to frame up and smash the labor movement. "Up until now" the President has taken almost every step in the war game but the actual declaration of war.

That Quill and Potash, who have been accomplices in every step in the preparation of war, will balk at the final step, the declaration of war, is a fairy tale to deceive little children. But that they were able to support Roosevelt "up until now" is just another way of expressing the Stalinist line: so long as Roosevelt and Stalin were in the same war camp, the "president's record" was good enough; but now that Stalin has jumped into the Hitler camp, we must "be vigilant and watch everybody from Washington down . . ." as Potash put it.

It isn't exactly consistent to call Roosevelt an agent of "monopoly capital," to urge distrust and "vigilance" on the one hand, and on the other support him for a third term. It isn't consistent, indeed, because the Stalinist policy is a fake from beginning to end. That's why there is not one word of criticism of Quill and Potash in the Daily Worker. The Stalinists are not mobilizing the masses against Roosevelt's war policy; they are merely trying to frighten Roosevelt into coming to terms with the Hitler-Stalin war camp. The Stalinist opposition to Roosevelt is just as fraudulent as is the Lewis-Hillman defense of the workers against Roosevelt.

STALINIST SPEECHES SHOW PARTY LINE HYPOCRISY The speeches of Quill and Potash, qualifying their support of Roosevelt are perfect examples of how spurious and hypocritical is the new "radical" line of the Stalinists. "We believe," said Quill, "that endorsing a third term at this time is correct. But we are dealing with the President's record only up until now. From now on labor has no right to predict what the President will do. And while we now adopt this resolution and support him, we remind and warn the entire labor movement that it should look out and see that President Roosevelt and

the M-Day dictatorship plans of the Roosevelt administration.

STALINISTS MEET ISSUE FACING BOTH WAYS

The resolutions for the third term at the New York and New Jersey conventions were adopted unanimously. The Jersey resolution was made unanimous after a vote of 96-66 carried it. These unanimous votes included the delegates from the Stalinist-controlled unions. Have the Stalinist trade union officials bucked the party line of opposition to Roosevelt, laid down by Earl Browder in his Boston speech? Browder said in that speech:

"The President and his Administration succumb more and more every day to the greed for profits by American monopoly capital, and makes use of its former prestige among the masses to secure their acceptance of the program of Wall Street."

That the president fed "the greed for profits by American monopoly capital" since the day he took office—Browder cannot say. Only yesterday, as everyone recalls, the President was still the White Hope of Browder and Co. Browder no longer backs Roosevelt only because Roosevelt's foreign policy is no longer consistent with Stalin's foreign policy. Hence the decree to the party members and all its trade unionists to go into opposition. In the New York CIO Convention, Michael Quill of the Transport Union and Irving Potash of the Fur Workers, as well as other Stalinists, voted for the Third Term resolution. In New Jersey 66 delegates, most of them Stalinists, at first voted against the Third Term resolution. How is this to be explained? Confronted with the acid test of going into outright opposition to Lewis, Hillman and the Roosevelt administration, Quill and Potash backed down. They had too much to lose by fully supporting the position of the Kremlin bureaucracy. In New Jersey, on the other hand, second line union bureaucrats could make the gesture of opposition—and then join in the unanimous vote—without facing the consequences that would be in store for top leaders like Quill and Potash at the hands of Lewis.

The CIO organizing drive two and three years ago became a crusade of effective strike movements only because the workers, the third camp, seized the handle of opportunity in their own hands.

The CIO today needs a third camp again. This time to beat back the war-mongering Lewis-Hillman supporters of war-monger Roosevelt and the Stalinist war-mongering supporters of war-mongers Hitler-Stalin. A third camp of the rank and file from the shops and factories against the war and against capitalist reaction at home! That is the need of the hour.

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