

Comments

On Life, Liberty and Pursuit of Happiness

By BILL REICH

Death of Blue Eagle...

Besides declaring the NRA unconstitutional, the Supreme Court in the past 25 years has had to decide on the following momentous issues: the regulation of Chinese laundries, the manufacture and sale of oleomargarine, unripe lemons, kosher meat and boric acid; the size of a loaf of bread in Chicago; chain store profits, regulation of chiropractors, junk dealers, New Orleans prostitutes, Greek letter fraternities, ticket scalping in New York and oyster planting and bird-shooting by aliens. . . . "It breaks my heart to see what has been done to the NRA," sobbed General Hugh Johnson. . . . Garment workers at the Happ Brothers factory at Macon, Ga., must pay back in small installments the wage increase granted under the NRA. . . . When the NRA became operative in 1933 the following conditions prevailed on the basis of a score of 100 percent in 1926: factory production 84, employment 78, wages 59. When the NRA stopped the following conditions prevailed: factory production 84, employment 81 and wages 68. Practically all the increase was due to the spending of government relief money. . . . Delivering what he termed "the greatest speech in history" and which lasted 15 hours, Huey Long failed to prevent the passage of the new NRA bill. Among the topics discussed were: cheese dressing for head lettuce, himself, grave robbing, cheaper coffins, share-the-wealth, pot-likker, James A. Farley, mixing drinks and how to fry oysters. . . .

Advice to Graduates...

"I am one who does not believe that some soft-handed fathead down in Washington can run my husband's business," orated Mrs. George B. Simmons, wife of a Missouri farmer, at the "grass root" conference of the G.O.P. No substitute platform was adopted because all farmers present were drawing AAA benefits. . . . A recent study by the Brookings Institute states: "Neither results nor promise of the AAA program justify indefinite continuation of the experiment." The study further states that wheat prices increased because of the drought, the influence of the tariff and to some extent by dollar depreciation. . . .

Cops...

In the recent strike disorders in Omaha, General J. J. Paul substituted "stinking gas" and "knock-out gas" for tear gas which he termed "ineffective." A man was killed and several women injured when "knockout gas" was hurled into a group of bystanders. . . . Passaic, N. J. police must attend church every Sunday and take a Monday quiz on the service. . . . Twenty persons were injured by shotgun slugs, schoolchildren were gassed, as cops and company thugs charged a picketline at the Canton, Ohio, Tin Plate Co. . . . "The government attempts to meddle too much with business. I'll make a million cars next year if they just let the police run the country. And I don't mean the Federal police, I mean the local police," says Henry Ford as the 2,000,000th V8 is run off the assembly line. . . .

Agricultural Adjustment

Herbert Hoover at the Stanford commencement tells about bosses: "Both in the stages of manual labor and professional work, I missed the discovery that I was a wage slave. I at least had the feeling that it was my option that if I did not like a particular profit taker I could find another one somewhere. I found then a cheery and helpful lot of folk who took an enormous interest in helping young people get a start. And you will find that is the case today." . . . Nicholas Murray Butler of Columbia explains the class struggle: "The perfectly baseless notion that society is organized into fixed, definite and mutually antagonistic classes, each of which should be intent upon putting barriers and limitations upon others is in large measure responsible for the prevailing immorality and unreasonableness which, unless quickly conquered and rejected, will end by destroying all incentive to human effort to reach the highest type of accomplishment and service." . . . President S. Jarrett of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, from which Granville Hicks was recently discharged because of his radical ideas, clarifies the meaning of academic freedom: "We have recently been attacked on the ground that we have stifled academic freedom and abridged free speech. You all know the charge is false. We adhere to an unwritten regulation of long standing that there shall be excluded from all classrooms all controversial discussion about politics, sociology, etc. We cannot permit the excessive academic freedom which must be stigmatized as academic license." . . .

Letters to the Editor

Furrier Hails Unity Achieved in Union; Tells of Progressive's Role

Editor, New Militant:

After many attempts and after ten years of suffering we have finally succeeded in creating one Furriers' union and in putting a stop to the seemingly interminable inner struggle which has had no equal in the history of the New York trade unions.

After many preliminary meetings the question of one union in the furriers' trade was discussed at the Cooper Union meeting of June 12. This meeting will undoubtedly remain, and will be referred to, as one of the most outstanding events in the history of inner labor troubles. Thousands of furriers, members of both unions, filled the hall to capacity. After a long discussion on the floor, in which many members as well as the leaders of the Industrial Union actively participated, the proposals for creating one strong union, made by the "Committee of Seven" which was elected at the last convention of the Furriers' International, was unanimously adopted and acclaimed with great enthusiasm.

The long inner struggle of the furriers should be of great interest to all organized labor, especially to the workers in the needle trades. Almost all the energy of the workers was exhausted in the needless struggle to fight one another. Due to the false tactics of the furriers' leaders, the bosses had a good chance to undermine conditions in the trade, bringing them down to the lowest possible level.

Conditions Degraded

It has long been clear to every class-conscious furrier that the only solution and remedy for his troubles is one strong union. During the time when the two unions existed, conditions in the trade went from bad to worse. The workers, having lost confidence in their leaders, lost one position after another. Big shops were subdivided into smaller units with the result that the workers suffered the consequences of lower wages and long hours. Contracting was at its height. As a result of the practice of giving out work to the contractors, the workers in many instances lost their jobs altogether. Over-time work was established in practically all shops and all agreements as to the scale of wages were universally violated. In fact, there was no scale of wages.

At this moment, at the threshold of unity, it is worth while referring to the inhuman conditions of the past so that we may correct our wrongs and learn our lesson from past experience, and so that the miserable conditions under which we have labored may never see the light again.

There is no doubt that the reactionary leaders of the A. F. of L. were greatly responsible for the inhuman conditions that prevailed in the trade. They ruled with an

iron fist. Every leading member who was honestly and sincerely interested in helping to build one strong union for the interests of the workers, and who dared to speak his mind, and criticize the leadership with its false tactics and methods, was immediately expelled from the union, ruthlessly persecuted and deprived of all means of earning a livelihood.

The Role of the Stalinists

On the other side of the picture, the official leaders of the left wing (Stalinists) and their contradictory and inconsistent tactics brought about by their desire to create at all costs and under all circumstances "revolutionary" unions, were no less responsible for the split of the workers. Is it not a known fact that any union which was not a part of the "Red Trade Union International" was considered a fascist organization? Who cannot recall the so-called "third period" when the aim was to split the membership of the A. F. of L.? Thus the topsy-turvy politics of the Stalinists accelerated the split of organized labor and helped the reactionary leaders of the A. F. of L. to rid it of the most militant elements in their unions. Indeed, the purpose of such policies was more to serve the bureaucratic interests of the Stalin group than to serve the interests of the workers in their trades. However, the change of the C. P. line, in regard to trade unionism, to disband its red revolutionary unions and to join the A. F. of L., which became on a moment's notice, the law of the Communist Party, changed the attitude of the furriers' "left" leaders and truly revealed the character of the C. P.

It is a known fact that the "left opposition" (Trotskyists) and later the "Workers Party of U.S.," which has been advocating unity on the basis of democratic rights in the A. F. of L., long before the Stalinists changed their policy to dissolve the "T.U.U.L." was regarded as counter-revolutionist and as treacherous to the working class. Progressive elements in the furriers, took a similar position as that of the W. P. despite the torrent of abuse hurled at them by the Stalinist bureaucracy.

Struggle of Progressives

Thus, the Industrial Union which came into existence because of its opposition to the bureaucratic methods of the A. F. of L. later on resorted to the same bureaucratic tactics and ruthlessly persecuted every worker whose opinion was out of line with the policies of the leadership of the Industrial Union. Fortunately, however, a group of rank and file workers of the Industrial Union, which came to life in opposition to the bureaucratic methods of their leaders who ruled in disguise under the name of Communism, pushed a fight for democratic rights in the union, and for

unity. Now, when one union has become a reality, we must not forget that credit must be given to the progressive members of the International, especially those from the Toronto local whose honest leadership truthfully served the interests of the workers, by fighting out at their last convention in Toronto the principle which paved the way and laid the basis for unity.

It is high time now that we discard the old and familiar methods and arrive at the convention that the way for American workers to free themselves from exploitation is not to follow the past footprints of the official leadership—right and "left"—the result of which was to split the ranks of the workers, but to march forward, all united in one great union.

—J. KAMINITSKY.

Sacramento Case and Agricultural Union

The Editors have received a copy of the following letter, which The Nation has not yet seen fit to print. We give it space because of our comrade Norman Mini's inability to deal properly with such questions from inside prison walls.

April 30, 1935.

To the Editors of The Nation: In recent issues of your magazine, Norman Mini and Caroline Decker, former active leaders of the Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union, expressed differing views as to the responsibility for the collapse of the Union. Mini attributed the collapse to the policies of the Communist Party which led the Union; Decker, in answer to Mini's article and in defense of the Communist Party, tried to show that the workers have not suffered a defeat, and this last in the face of the fact that the Union has been wrecked, which she does not deny.

Being that Mini, as well as Decker, is now in San Quentin serving a term for "criminal syndicalism" and cannot lay his hands on a document which casts a glaring light upon Decker's defense of the Communist Party, I take it upon myself to defend him against the impeachment of some of his statements.

On December 18 Caroline Decker wrote: "I'm not prepared to say that the criminal neglect of the Union by the D. C. was 'opposition.'" She, like all the other active unionists, knew that the District Committee of the Communist Party had wrecked the Union. . . . the only problem being, was it by neglect, opposition, disruption, wrong trade union policies, or whatnot.

Not long ago I published a poem in the New Masses dedicated to Caroline Decker. I am not without hope that some day the courage I praised in that poem will return to her and she will say openly what she still believes: that the policies of the Communist Party wrecked the Union we all helped to build, and that it bears no small share of the responsibility for the fact that she, Mini and six others are now in state prisons.

Sincerely,
PAUL COURTNEY.

Criticizes Article on Franco-Soviet Pact

To the Editor:

The "Open Letter To The World Proletariat," featured in the June 8 issue of the "New Militant," furnish the reader with ample evidence that Lenin has not lived in vain. The letter carries in the opening paragraph a statement, however, that must be termed an irresponsible assertion, to say the least. The second sentence reads: "Today there is not a single worker, even the most politically backward, who is unaware that the Soviet bureaucrats have just publicly, decisively betrayed the international proletariat." This statement is so entirely out of harmony with the letter as a whole that the reader has just reason to think it originated with an ambitious but ill-advised translator.

If this statement were true, the Stalinist parties would immediately lose all of its members save possibly those put there by Stalin himself. The facts are that the spokesmen for the Soviet bureaucracy hail the Stalin-Laval pact as a great victory for the Soviet Union directly, and indirectly a victory for the international proletariat. And accepting the creed of "Stalin Infallibility" the members and sympathizers of the Stalinist parties, in true Catholic fashion, embrace as valid everything that Moscow has put its stamp of approval upon. And yet, members of the C. P., be they American or French, are not "the most politically backward," for they are at least convinced of the fact that society is divided into classes and that a struggle is raging between these classes. If these workers were not class conscious, their revolutionary illiteracy notwithstanding, they would not be members of the C. P. or any other party having for its aim the overthrow of the bourgeoisie.

Now, let us proceed one step further: if hundreds of thousands of class-conscious workers fail to see in the latest Stalin maneuver a betrayal of the international proletariat, how are we to look upon this statement as applied to the non-class-conscious workers numbering millions? How many workers are there in these supposedly enlightened United States who have never as much as heard of the Stalin-Laval pact? How many more are there whose knowledge of this infamous betrayal is limited to a vague memory of having seen something about it in the headlines of an ordinary capitalist newspaper? Their numbers are great!

Our tactics in the class struggle vary to suit a given condition. A false evaluation of conditions as they really are leads to incorrect tactics. If we were to take the statement referred to above seriously, we would at the same time be compelled to take measures that in idiom would outstrip the worst brainstorms of the Stalinists during the so-called "third period."

The Open Letter, as a whole, is a masterly analysis of the Stalin degeneracy, and it would be better still if the statement in question were stricken out altogether.

E. EVERETT.

Sergei Trotsky Imprisoned By Stalinist Bureaucrats

(Continued from Page 1) and his intellectual bent.

An Act of Vengeance

Why, even the authorities, from Stalin down, were well aware of it: Sergei, I repeat, grew up in the Kremlin, Stalin's son was a frequent visitor in the boy's room; the G.P.U. and the university authorities kept a redoubled watch over him first as a student, secondly as a young professor. He was arrested not for any sort of opposition activity (which did not exist and under all circumstances could not exist) but exclusively as the son of L. D. with the aim of wreaking vengeance upon the family. This is the only explanation possible.

All comrades remember the at-

tempt of the G.P.U. to link up the name of L. D. with the Kiroff assassination: the Latvian consul who gave money for the terrorist act offered at the same time to the terrorists to transmit a letter from them to Trotsky. This whole scheme, however, fell through and served only to compromise the organizers of the trial.

A New Amalgam

But precisely because of it we repeated frequently in our family circle after the trial: "They will not stop at this, they will have to prepare some new case to cover up the failure of the amalgam with the consul." The same thought was also expressed by L. D. in his articles in the Russian Bulletin.

The only thing that we did not know was the method the G.P.U. will choose this time. But now there can be not even a shadow of a doubt. By arresting the absolutely innocent Sergei and by keeping him in jail for months Stalin clearly and indubitably pursues the aim of creating a new "amalgam."

For this purpose he must force confession, even if only a "renunciation" of his father. I will not speak of the methods by which Stalin obtains the confessions he requires. I have no information on this score. But all the circumstances speak for themselves. . . .

An International Committee

It would be very simple to verify the facts stated in this letter. It would be sufficient, for instance, to establish an international committee consisting of authoritative and sincere individuals, of course, well-established friends of the U.S.S.R. Such a committee would have to examine into all repressions in connection with the Kiroff assassination, among other things it would throw the necessary light also on the case of our son Sergei.

This suggestion has nothing exceptional or unacceptable. When the Social Revolutionaries, the organizers of attempts on the lives of Lenin and Trotsky were being tried in 1922, the Central Committee under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky afforded Vandervelde, Kurt Rosenfeld and other adversaries of the Soviet government the right to participate in the trial as defenders of the accused terrorists. This was done precisely in order to dispel in the mind of the international proletariat any doubts as to the fairness of the trial.

Could not Romain Rolland, Charles Gide, Bernard Shaw and other friends of the Soviet Union assume the initiative to establish such a committee in agreement with the Soviet government? This would be the best method of checking on the accusations and the suspicious widely spread in the working masses.

The Soviet bureaucracy cannot place itself above the public opinion of the international working class. As regards the interests of the workers' state, a serious verification of its actions could only serve to its advantage. I, for one, would submit to such an authoritative committee all necessary information and documents concerning my son.

This letter of mine is therefore a direct appeal to working class organizations and friends of the U.S.S.R. abroad, not to interested attorneys of the Soviet bureaucracy, of course, but to sincere and independent friends of the October revolution.

If after prolonged hesitation, I raise openly the question of Sergei it is not only because he happens to be my son. This reason would be more than sufficient for a mother but insufficient to arouse political initiative. But the case of Sergei represents a clear, simple and indisputable case of conscious and criminal self-will, a case which can be very easily verified: the bureaucratic upper-crust crushes and torments a highly qualified Soviet worker who is known to be loyal and absolutely innocent—only in order to satisfy the base instincts of revenge without any political justification: for is it not absolutely obvious that physical suffering inflicted on the son could have no influence whatever on the direction of the political activity of the father, an activity to which Sergei was never in any way related?

That is why I permit myself to think that the case of my son deserves public attention. At any rate, whoever wants to act must act immediately, because given silence and impunity the vengeful acts of Stalin may soon assume an ir-retrievable character.

France, June 1, 1935.

DENVER (FP).—Industrial unionism as a means of ending jurisdictional disputes was endorsed by the Colorado Federation of Labor convention by an 8 to 1 vote.

The Manager's Corner

Full Steam Ahead Now in Drive for Eight-Page New Militant!

Our campaign for the eight-page weekly New Militant suffered a serious delay due to the plenary meeting of the party National Committee which was held in New York last week. This was unfortunate but it was unavoidable. More regrettable yet is the fact that because of the same reasons we were compelled to skip last week's issue. However, skipping on such occasions is the rare exception, not the rule, and insofar as the campaign is concerned we suggest that it be taken up with redoubled energy and with redoubled speed.

During this intervening fortnight we have received the following contributions toward the eight-page weekly:

- L. Berg, New York City...\$ 3.00
- A. Konkow, Boston..... 25.00
- S. Harrison, N. Y. C..... 5.00
- H. Gund, N. Y. C..... 1.00
- W. J. R., California..... 2.00
- Flatbush Branch, N. Y. C. 13.00
- Katherine Smith, N.Y.C. 5.00

Total.....\$54.00

This is a very small beginning but with the interference accounted for it is understandable. There was a certain delay in forwarding the material necessary to go ahead with the work. Now this is in the hands of all the party branches and similar material will be forwarded to our numerous friendly contacts. Nobody will be left out of consideration. Everybody is invited to help put the campaign for the eight-page weekly over the top before August first.

Previously we suggested the various ways in which help can be given. First of all is the matter of a cash contribution. Secondly, a new subscription to the eight-page weekly will be similarly appreciated and incidentally it will help to extend our circulation. If the method of club subscription cards at the three months reduced rate is preferred \$1.50 forwarded will secure four such cards. Thirdly, where subscriptions prove too difficult to obtain solicit greetings at 25c per name to the first eight-page issue. Fourthly, those who are ready to pledge a certain monthly contribution to maintain the security fund please forward their name and address with the monthly amount indicated.

The delay that already occurred imposes the necessity of more speed in the carrying on of the campaign. Let us have your response right away. Watch next week's issue for rules of contests and prizes in this campaign!

The club card system has been made effective use of by the New Militant builders during the last two weeks. The Minneapolis branch topped the list with 20 club subscriptions. Rose Cassano from Chicago secured 8. J. Gregory, Chicago, secured 4; Cyrus Rigby, Chicago, N. Y., 4; Larry Cohen, New York, 4; Freda Charles, New York, 4; Leon Goodman, Philadelphia, 4; and Davenport Branch, 4. This makes a total of 52 club subscriptions.

Force Yipsels Resign Posts

Alex Retskin, City Organizer, and Ruth Oxman, City Secretary, of the New York Y.P.S.L. have resigned their posts under pressure for signing a Left wing statement. No sooner had the four-page mimeographed statement been distributed than the fourteen signatories, all leading Yipsels, were taken to task by Norman Thomas. In both the New Leader and the Socialist Call the young comrades were condemned as "romantic insurrectionists."

The ostensible reason for issuing the Left declaration is to present the views of revolutionary socialism to the Yipsels in preparation for their national convention to be held next month. The signers who it appears, have not worked as an organized group, either for any time before the appearance of the statement or since, call for the building of the Y.P.S.L. "into a revolutionary organization based on revolutionary principles."

The Proposed Program

They propose a program of revolutionary socialism. These principles are a statement of the general Communist position on the state, dictatorship of the proletariat, workers' councils, armed insurrection, reformism and the vanguard party. The declaration is therefore extremely abstract, leaving aside the question of an attitude toward the factions in the Socialist Party and Y.P.S.L., a position towards the Internationals, a position on the Soviet Union, attitude towards other workers' parties, war, fascism and the immediate problems of the working class. Likewise the specific role of the Y.P.S.L. is glossed over.

These omissions can be explained on two grounds: first the desire to "begin with the fundamentals" and second, and in all likelihood the more important, there is no agreement among the signatories on these questions. Most of them are associated with the New York "Militants." Others have been members of the Revolutionary Policy Committee.

"Militants" Embarrassed

The statement has embarrassed the leaders of the "Militants." Issued without consultation with the caucus it puts clearly before the leaders the task of accepting a clear position on the problem of the road to power. Nothing is more distasteful to the "Militant" leaders than the adoption of an unambiguous position on this question since it would lead to further separation both from the left or the right.

The task of the young Socialists who accept the "principles of revolutionary socialism" is to further clarify their position regarding the concrete application of revolutionary principles in the present epoch and involve the membership in the discussion. Clarity on all the fundamental questions of the revolution is the indispensable prerequisite for revolutionary action.

PAUL LUTTINGER, M.D.
DANIEL LUTTINGER, M.D.
5 Washington Square North
1-2 and 6-8 Except Sundays and Holidays.

K.C. Battery Workers Strike

KANSAS CITY, June 18.—Two weeks after union organization began in the plant of the National Battery plant here the summary firing of 11 of the most active union men forced the issue of a strike. About half the plant including the major part of the production staff walked out at the call of the A. F. of L. United Auto Workers Union. The spirit of the strikers was high and the men remaining in the plant were sympathetic.

An injunction was issued against the pickets on a trumped up "dynamiting threat" charge. Martens, President of the local, backed down, failed to support the strike, called off the pickets with a statement that he was "acting like a gentleman."

His "gentlemanly" tactics rapidly discredited Martens with the strikers, who are determined to stay out and eager to fight the issue on the picket line. A progressive group is getting under way, planning to put pressure on Martens, contact other organizations in the city, and set up a mass picket line. If the proper steps are taken the strike runs a good chance, as the busy season begins in July.

The National Battery Co. has plants all over the U. S., the largest in St. Paul, Chicago Heights, and New York. Attempts will be made to contact the workers in the other plants. A protest to the government, one of the largest customers of the company, is contemplated.

What to Attend

- New York City
Friday, July 12, 8 P.M.—Mass Meeting—Protest Persecution of Bolshevik Revolutionists in Soviet Russia. Speaker: A. J. Muste. At 1776 Pitkin Ave., Brooklyn.
- Minneapolis, Minn.
Sunday, July 7—Minneapolis: Joint Picnic of Workers Party and Spartacus Youth League at Minnehaha Park, picnic grounds No. 4 (in the glen). Starts at noon. Diamond-ball, races, refreshments and prizes.

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