

THE LIBERALS AND MARCH 6

Some Aspects of Unemployment Campaign

By WM. Z. FOSTER.

THE liberals are showing much activity in connection with the New York March 6 demonstration. This holds true of the Civil Liberties Union, as well as of the groups of professors and other intellectuals following the lead of Norman Thomas. These petty-bourgeois elements are undertaking to turn this historic struggle to their own advantage. Their whole line shows that, true to their class make-up, they are part of the capitalist united front against the workers.

To begin with, the liberals, like the capitalists in general, try to play down the basic issue of the March 6 demonstration; that is, as a struggle of the great masses of unemployed against the intolerable conditions confronting them. They ignore almost completely that the big struggle developed around the Union Sq. demonstration primarily because millions of workers have no jobs and the unemployed, in New York as elsewhere, seized upon March 6 as an occasion when, under the leadership of the Communist Party, they could develop a struggle in defense of their demands. To hear the liberals tell it, the Union Square demonstration developed almost out of thin air. In thus ignoring the central issue of unemployment, the liberals play the game of the capitalists and tend to sidetrack and defeat the whole movement.

The liberals try to reduce the Union Square demonstration merely to a question of police brutality. They do not even raise the question of civil liberties. They admit that Whalen was within his legal rights to prohibit the parade and thus to deny the workers the opportunity to bring forward their intolerable grievances effectively. Did not the Civil Liberties Union in fact send a letter of praise to Whalen complimenting him for his preparations for handling the March 6 demonstration, preparations which constituted a gigantic mobilization of New York's 25,000 police and firemen to terrorize the workers and to deny them their alleged civic rights? To the liberals the issue was not that elementary civil liberties of the workers were suppressed but that Whalen used unseemly violence in so doing.

Following their line of distorting the political character of the Union Square demonstration, the liberals try to narrow the struggle down simply to between the Communists and the police. Here again they follow the propaganda of the capitalist press. They try to make it appear as though the gigantic demonstration consisted primarily only of a small group of Communists, plus masses of more or less disinterested and curious onlookers, and that the trouble arose when the Communists undertook to march and thus came into conflict with the police. For them the issue is "the reds versus the police."

This falsifies the whole situation. The Union Square meeting was not simply a Communist demonstration, but a great mass turnout of the workers generally. The great masses were active participants. Not only did the Communists come into conflict with the police but

so did the multitude of workers as well. This is made clear by the moving pictures of the demonstration, which show that when the parade started the whole gigantic mass got into motion and started to head down Broadway. Naturally the Communists, the leaders of the demonstration, came most sharply into conflict with the police before, during, and after the demonstration. But to attempt to reduce the issue simply to a struggle between "the reds and the police" not only misses but combats the real political meaning of the demonstration.

The liberals attempt further to narrow down the issue to their own petty-bourgeois conceptions by seeking to divert the struggle simply into a legalistic effort to remove Whalen from his post as police commissioner. They saw nothing wrong in the capitalist state of which Whalen is a part: It is only a case of a "bad" and "illiberal" official. Remove him and all will be well.

All these tendencies of the petty-bourgeois liberals to destroy the mass working class character of the March 6 demonstration we must combat. It is necessary to emphasize and to develop our whole line on the fact that the March 6 fight was a great struggle of the workers around the issue of unemployment. We must use this demonstration as a means to enormously strengthen our campaign among the unemployed workers to organize them, to link their fight with that of the employed, and to bring forward their demands for social insurance, the shorter work day, etc. We must also make the unemployed masses realize that all the workers arrested in connection with the unemployed demonstration are in first line the leaders of the unemployed, and then draw these masses into support of the March 6 prisoners.

We must militantly resist all efforts of the liberals which follow the same line as the social democrats and the capitalists themselves, to portray the March 6 demonstration simply as a meeting of Communists. This is an attempt to divorce us from the masses. On the contrary, the March 6 demonstration must be utilized for the purpose of strengthening our mass contacts, of building the Communist Party and establishing the Trade Union Unity League in the broad ranks of the working class.

We must also fight against the dangerous liberal illusions that the problem will be solved by the removal of Whalen. While fighting for the elimination of this capitalist lickspittle, we must emphasize that the main enemy is the Whalens.

When Whalen goes he will be succeeded by another chief of police equally loyal to the capitalists and probably far more efficient in carrying through their program of suppressing and exploiting the workers. Above all the March 6 demonstrations must be utilized to disillusion the masses regarding the capitalist system, to inculcate in them revolutionary principles, to draw them into our program of defense of the Soviet Union, and of revolutionary attack against capitalism.