

To the 2nd Convention of the Labor Youth League

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MAY I EXTEND my best greetings to your Convention* and congratulate you upon the brave way your organization is now standing up under the attacks of the reactionary Eisenhower government and its McCarthy affiliates. This is a time of testing. Now is when your League is being steeled for the great class struggles lying directly ahead.

In my remarks of greeting to you I shall not undertake to advise you on specific youth problems, but will confine myself to those broader questions in which the youth of our country, as well as the broad masses of the population in general, are deeply interested.

The main characteristic of American imperialism in this post-war period is a ruthless drive for world domination. Wall Street Big Business, the most powerful imperialism in the world, is resolved to wipe Socialism from the earth and to establish its control over all other countries. This is a vain and futile hope. To secure world control finance capital is quite prepared to plunge the

world into another great war, a horrible atomic war, and is orienting upon this basis. This is the meaning of the current gigantic militarization going on in this country and throughout the capitalist world, for which our government, since the end of World War II, has squandered no less than 250 billion dollars. The whole drive is based on the double big lie of a "Communist menace" and of the inevitability of war.

This huge militarization campaign is bringing about a sharp drop in American living standards through skyrocketing prices and taxes, and growing unemployment. It is also the basic reason for the deadly growth of McCarthyism in the United States. McCarthyism is fascism, American-brand. Its aim, in the imperialist interest of Big Business, is, by curtailing the liberties of the American people, to undermine their capacity to fight against the Wall Street profiteers and warmongers. The extreme demagoguery of the Republicans in the present campaign reflects the dangerous growth of fascism in the country.

* Held in New York City, February, 1954.

During the years of the "cold war," the American working class, Negro people, poor farmers, and other democratic strata, have developed much effective opposition to those who would lead our country into economic crisis, fascist slavery, and world war. The supreme expression of this opposition to date was the forcing through of the truce in Korea in conjunction with peace-loving peoples all over the world in spite of desperate efforts of President Eisenhower, Secretary Dulles, and their co-workers, to keep the war going. This was a great victory for the people; it greatly eased international tension and it opened the door for new and still greater successes for the forces of world peace.

But the struggles of the American people against the exploiters and warmongers have been much hindered by the existence of crippling illusions among the masses. Among them were the illusions that the industrial boom, based on munitions making, would last indefinitely; illusions that the red-baiting Smith Act and other fascist-like laws, under which Gene Dennis, Ben Davis and scores of others were jailed, affected only the Communists; illusions that conveniently blamed the war danger upon the Soviet Union and gave the Wall-Street government a clean bill of health as an innocent defender of world peace and democracy.

The situation is now radically changing. The general course of economic and political events is tending

to disillusion the workers and their allies regarding those things mentioned above, which they took for granted only a few months ago. It is, therefore, not difficult to forecast that within the near future the United States will be the scene of big and hard-fought class struggles, in which the toiling masses will take some long steps forward.

To begin with, the election of Eisenhower as President, his loading up of his Cabinet with Big Business men, his unfolding of a drastically anti-labor program, and his moving in the direction of McCarthyism, have caused serious disillusionment and generated opposition far and wide among the toiling masses. This is reflected in the wide anti-Eisenhower spirit in the A.F. of L., C.I.O., etc. The workers and others, awakening from their false belief under the Truman Administration that it was "their" government, are now coming to realize that this is a government of, by, and for Big Business. This is a long stride ahead, and it will be followed by a more effective political opposition to Wall Street's reactionary policies and the development of more independent working-class political action.

Secondly, with the serious decline in production, with some 4,000,000 workers without jobs and with the army of the unemployed growing rapidly from month to month, the workers are very alarmed and are increasingly in a mood to take vigorous steps to guard their jobs and

living standards. One thing we can be sure of—never again will the workers of this country submit to the outrageous unemployment of the early 1930's, when from 10 to 17 million walked the streets jobless.

Obviously, the so-called anti-depression program of the Eisenhower government, based on the theories of John Maynard Keynes, bodes no good for the workers. It sums up to a new version of the "trickle down" theory of the Hoover Administration. This was lately expressed by C. E. Wilson, as "What is good for General Motors is good for the United States." The whole economic program of the Eisenhower Administration aims at two things—the conservation and increase of capitalist profits and the building of a great military machine for eventual war against the U.S.S.R. and its friends.

The workers' program must collide head-on with the reactionary Eisenhower-Keynesian program. It must be based on peace, breaking completely with the idea of keeping the industries running by making munitions wholesale. It must also be based upon a whole series of propositions that cut directly into the monster profits of the capitalists. Labor's program, as the unions are now beginning to understand, must include such anti-Keynesian measures as the maintenance and increase of wage rates, jobs for all, a vast improvement in the social security system, establishment of the thirty-hour week

into monopoly prices, drastic cuts in workers' taxes, huge public works programs of housing, road, hospital, and school building, reforestation, flood control, opening of East-West trade, etc., etc. The workers are now getting ready to fight for such demands. This is a political fact of tremendous importance.

Third, the workers, Negro people, and others, observing with alarm the great growth of the McCarthy fascist movement, on the basis of a rabid anti-Communist hysteria, are coming to understand that red-baiting affects not only the Communist Party, but also the whole democratic body of the American people. Now they see the alarming situation of not only "Reds," "socialists," and "liberals" being red-baited and intimidated, but Stevenson, Truman, Marshall, and even the whole leadership of the Democratic Party. "Twenty years of treason," bellows McCarthy in characterizing the Roosevelt and Truman Administrations. Treason in wartime, which is what McCarthy is accusing Truman and Marshall of, gets the death penalty. Your organization, too, is feeling the lash of this fascist drive.

A broad wave of anti-McCarthy spirit is now rising among the working masses. It is the duty of every progressive organization, including especially yours, to help to give clarity, understanding, direction and drive to this new and dynamic anti-McCarthy movement. And one of the

without pay reduction, sharp slashes major demands we should never

forget in this fight is for the release of Gene Dennis, Ben Davis, and the many others who have been railroaded to jail under the Smith Act and other fascist-like thought-control laws.

The workers are increasingly in a mood to attack this outrageous legislation, as we see more and more from the actions of the A.F. of L., C.I.O. and other labor and progressive organizations. This trend, too, is a hopeful political fact of major significance.

Fourth, the workers are also taking a new look at the war program of American imperialism. Their opposition to it grows more widespread, more determined, and more clear-sighted. This is especially true in view of the Administration's so-called "liberation" policy of starting civil wars in various opposing countries, and its open threats to use the A-bomb at any time and any place where Dulles and Company decide that a Communist "aggression" has taken place. Since the Soviet Union broke the A-bomb and H-bomb monopoly, great masses of the American people have come to realize more than ever that a major war today would result in the annihilation of American cities and the death of tens of millions of our people; and they want none of it.

The people's success in forcing through the Korean truce was a victory of world-wide proportions for international peace. It gives great encouragement to the masses, show-

ing them that if they will but act together they can balk and defeat the warmongers. The truce has greatly eased world tension and made it vastly more difficult for the warmongers who are trying to develop a world war.

But we cannot conclude from this peace victory that the war danger is past and that all we have to do now is to rest upon our oars and let things drift. This would be a most serious political error. Andrew Stevens, in his pamphlet *New Opportunities in the Fight for Peace and Democracy*, gave us a most timely warning against making just such a mistake. Instead of slackening our peace efforts, we must intensify our struggle against every manifestation of militarism and the war spirit.

A serious war danger remains in the world, as long as American imperialism spends 50 times as much for military preparations as it did in 1938; as long as the United States has over 400 highly organized air bases throughout the world, with all their guns pointed against the Soviet Union; as long as the United States is desperately trying to rearm militaristic West Germany and Japan; as long as the United States continues to mass A- and H-bombs and refuses to outlaw them or to pledge itself not to use them in war; as long as this country keeps to its so-called liberation policy of fomenting civil wars in other countries; as long as the United States continues to build NATO, the war alliance against the

Soviet Union; as long as it continues to bar People's China from the United Nations; as long as it continues to regiment millions of our youth for war; and as long as McCarthyism grows in this country.

As long as the United States exhibits all the aggressive, militarist, imperialist qualities, just that long will there be a war danger which we must fight. If the peace forces have so far blocked the Wall Street forces for war, it is because of the stubborn fight they have made against the warmongers. It would be criminal folly if the peace forces were now to relax their guard. Now is the time, not to slacken the fight for peace, but to strengthen it. In this respect, we would do well to hearken to the advice of Togliatti, the great Italian Communist leader. He warned us in the February issue of *Political Affairs*, after pointing out the recent easing of the international situation, that if we want further to relax world tension, we must fight against every manifestation of war preparations. Togliatti wrote:

He who wants a lessening of the international tension must condemn such actions as the building of war bases on foreign territories and the direct and even armed interference in the internal life of free and independent states, the favorite method of the foreign policy of the United States. He who wants a lessening of the international tension must reject those alliances which, by the very way they arise, are alliances for preparing war.

This is especially significant advice for us here in the United States, the home of American imperialism, the only real source of war danger now in the world. Above all, we must be especially conscious of the danger of aggressive imperialism and lose no opportunity to fight against it. The Labor Youth League should be highly active in the fight for peace, for more than all other people the youth are the greatest sufferers during war or intensive preparations for war. The warmongers are the special enemies of the young people whose lives they ruin.

War is not inevitable, as the reactionaries are shouting. Far from that, the masses can stop the warmongers cold any time they see fit to act. As we have seen, they have, in the recent past, won many big victories for peace, and they can knock out the warmongers altogether and establish solid guarantees for world peace. But this big job will take real struggle, especially in the months and years immediately ahead. The only thing that is inevitable is the ultimate victory of the workers and their allies in the realization of Socialism.

I regard as still timely some remarks I made in an article, "The Battle for the Youth," in 1947:

As matters now stand in the United States, the youth are being sadly neglected by the various sections of the labor and progressive movement, even more so, in many respects, than the way these same forces neglected them in Europe in prewar days. . . . There

is no assurance that the youth will be automatically on the side of progress. The most powerful reaction in our country is avidly striving to capture and use the youth for its own profit-hungry, warmongering purposes. Therefore, if labor and the progressive forces want the youth, they must fight for them. The question of who will win the Battle for the Youth now going on in our country, is one of the most decisive political issues that the American people have to confront.*

We are living in difficult times. Left-wing fighters are being subjected

* *Political Affairs*, October, 1947, pp. 870-71.

to all kinds of persecution. But we will not allow ourselves to be intimidated by this terrorism. Now more than ever, we must maintain and support our organizations and keep a resolute front in the face of the barbarous capitalist enemy. The day will come before long when you young women and men will be doubly proud because you were members of the Labor Youth League during this stormy period. Those who stand and fight when the battle is difficult are those who really count in this world. The working class is invincible.