

**ORGANIZED
LABOR and
the FASCIST
DANGER . . .**

By WILLIAM Z. FOSTER

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

William Z. Foster, the author of this pamphlet, is National Chairman of the Communist Party and a veteran leader of the American labor movement, which he has served for more than fifty years. He led the great steel strike of 1919, which helped pave the way to industrial unionization of the basic industries in the U.S.A., and scores of other labor struggles. His most recent books are *American Trade Unionism*, a collection of his writings covering several decades; and *The New Europe*, an account, based on first hand observation, of the new democratic governments arising in Europe following World War II.

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RECENTLY, while fighting against the passage by Congress of the infamous Taft-Hartley slave labor bill, William Green and Philip Murray, Presidents of the A. F. of L. and C.I.O. respectively, warned the workers and the nation that the enactment of this reactionary bill would constitute a long step toward the establishment of fascism in the United States. These were indeed significant and startling statements, for Green and Murray are not men given to making such characterizations lightly. Their warnings about the fascist core of the Taft-Hartley bill were re-echoed by sober-thinking men and women all over the United States.

Green and Murray were correct in signaling the fascist content of the Taft-Hartley bill, which has since become the law of the land. We can already see that the workers are not going to take this law lying down. Even President Truman says the law is "unworkable," and it is certain that the workers will not tamely allow it to strip them of hard-won rights. For this outrageous law attempts to rob the trade unions of not only vital legislative gains made during the Roosevelt regime, but also of civil rights they have possessed for generations. The closed shop, for example, which the law abolishes, dates back 150 years. Likewise, from time immemorial the unions have exercised political rights now taken from them by the new law. Congress had outlawed strike-breaking injunctions many years ago with the Norris-LaGuardia Act, but the Taft-Hartley law now re-establishes this outrageous abuse.

The new law especially deals a heavy blow at the independence of the trade unions, by putting them directly under the control of the reactionary government. The Taft-Hartley Act is far more than a government strike-breaking law, it is a big stride toward the degeneration of the trade unions into state-

controlled organizations, which is always a decisive feature of fascism. The drafters of the Taft-Hartley law, both notorious tools of big business, are seeking to transform the free trade unions of the United States into slave labor organizations of the Hitler and Mussolini type.

As Mr. Green and Mr. Murray stated, the enactment of the Taft-Hartley law is indeed a long step toward fascism. The law's sinister significance is emphasized all the more by the many other fascist-like developments that have been taking place in our country since the end of the war. Among these are the passage of reactionary laws curtailing civil rights in many State legislatures, the outrageous lynching attacks upon the Negro people, the widespread growth of anti-Semitism, the many attempts to outlaw the Communist Party, the wild orgy of Red-baiting that is going on, the jingoistic campaign of militarism and anti-Soviet war-mongering now raging in the press and radio. Then there are the fascist activities of the House Committee on Un-American Activities. Even Hitler himself might well have envied this brazen institution, which is busily cultivating and organizing fascism in the United States. One of the most outrageous actions of this Committee is its present attempt to railroad to jail Gene Dennis, General Secretary of the Communist Party.

All these reactionary developments, taken together, undoubtedly constitute a developing fascist danger in this country. This reactionary trend was spurred on by the Republican election victory in 1946. It was further strengthened by the steady abandonment of the Roosevelt program by President Truman. It was also given a great impetus by the enactment of the ultra-reactionary Taft-Hartley slave labor bill. And if the Republicans should win the Presidency and control of Congress in the 1948 elections, then the fascist danger would become a real menace in the United States.

SOURCE OF FASCIST DANGER IN U.S.

The source of this fascist danger is the big trusts and monopolies which dominate the United States economically and politically. Those Wall Street combinations of finance

capital want a fascist-like regime in the United States so that they can weaken or destroy the labor movement and thus render the working class powerless, so they can still further increase their gigantic profits at the expense of American mass living standards, so they can thrust upon the toilers the burdens of the approaching economic crisis, and so they can militarize our country in preparation for an anti-Soviet war. Especially, the big capitalists want fascist-like reaction in this country so they can the better carry out their present warlike plans to establish Wall Street's imperialist domination over the war-ravaged world. The program of fascist reaction at home is the other side of monopoly's policy of imperialism and military aggression abroad. The Taft-Hartley slave labor law and the Marshall Plan are twin policies of big capital.

If there is a rising fascist and war danger in the United States, and this is most certainly the case, then, indeed, organized labor and every democratic force in our country must adopt as its first order of business the task of combatting and defeating this deadly peril. For the history of a dozen countries that were overwhelmed by fascism fairly shouts to us the urgent necessity of the workers and their allies to proceed without delay against the serious danger. Fascism, even in its infancy, cannot be trifled with. Especially not when it has behind it large sections of the most powerful, militant and ruthless capitalist class in the world.

We must be doubly on guard against American reaction and fascism, because it is springing up under insidious forms, not at all in the pattern of European fascism. For one thing, all sorts of American-type fascists are operating under the mask of a defense of democracy. Already we see such reactionary-minded men as ex-President Hoover and many others hypocritically parading about as ardent champions of democracy and as enemies of what they call "totalitarianism." Also, American fascism, unlike the war-glorifying type of Hitler and Mussolini, finds a protecting shield under the slick pretext of defending the peace of the world. American imperialism's drive to conquer the world, even at the cost of another great war, is thus characteristically obscured under the pretense of the United States having a moral obligation to lead the world

out of the post-war crisis. Moreover, American fascism, when it takes on more concrete forms, also will not indulge in the elaborate theorizing of European fascism, about the failure of bourgeois-democracy, about the glories of a totalitarian state, and about the leading role of the fascist elite. Its theories of the "superiority" of the Anglo-Saxon master race will also take on new and insidious forms. Realizing that the democratic-minded American people are on the alert against the obviously fascist doctrines, the reactionaries in this country who are really dangerous, not the lunatic fringe which stupidly apes Hitlerism, will carefully avoid all definitely labelled fascist conceptions. The wealthy monopolist rulers of this country will, in the main, try to cultivate their fascist trends, their rigid dictatorship of imperialist finance capital, and their war preparations, under cover of slogans apparently in line with American democratic traditions. This makes it all the more needful to single out and fight every fascist trend, however subtle.

ALL-INCLUSIVE UNITY NEEDED

This is the time when, under the possibility of the direst consequences, all the democratic forces of the United States must unite their strength in a joint struggle against the common danger, the incipient fascism which Murray and Green spoke about. Quarrels and feuds and differences that have split the forces of democracy, especially since Roosevelt's death, must be bridged over, no matter how important otherwise they may seem to be, or else the fascist-like trends in the country that are now cropping up vigorously will get such a head start that it will become impossible to eradicate them later on. Especially necessary is an all-inclusive unity of the anti-fascist forces—workers, farmers, Negroes, veterans, women, youth, intellectuals, small businessmen, etc.—an alliance which is indispensable to defeat the Republican Party and its reactionary Democratic allies in the Presidential elections of 1948. Anti-fascist slogans must be raised in the coming elections. Under no circumstances can the party of Hoover, Dewey, Vandenberg, McCormick, Pew and Patterson, the chief carrier of ultra-

reactionary and fascist tendencies in the United States, be allowed to win the national elections.

With reaction on the offensive and showing fascist tendencies, organized labor, which is the heart of the anti-fascist democratic coalition, must drastically improve its organization and its fighting tactics. Although with the present set-up and methods it was possible to advance the workers' interests moderately under the friendly Roosevelt regime, they are altogether inadequate now, when the unions face such a ruthless combination of capital as is at present on the rampage in the United States. Proof of this is shown by the fact that organized labor and its allies, unable to unite the tremendous democratic strength of the American people, did not prevent the Republican electoral victory in 1946, nor did they block the passage of the fascist-like Taft-Hartley bill. In both instances labor and its allies easily had the potential strength to win the victory if they had but organized it. It may also be predicted that unless the cooperation and fighting methods of the two national federations of labor are soon radically bettered, the workers run serious risk of a reactionary Republican victory in the 1948 elections. To go along as American labor is now doing, developing only a fraction of its strength, is to invite certain political disaster. No effective fight can be made against budding fascism unless the labor movement wakes up to the grave dangers it is now confronting and drastically revamps its organization and methods of struggle.

FIRST AND FOREMOST—LABOR UNITY

Most urgent of all in checking the fascist danger, organized labor must unite its own divided ranks. It would be criminal stupidity to continue to keep the workers split into two separate non-cooperative national federations in the face of the present offensive of the big Wall Street capitalists. There can be little doubt but that if the A. F. of L. had accepted the C.I.O.'s proposal of about a year ago for joint action against the Taft-Hartley bill, and if the two federations had made anything like an all-out fight together, this pernicious legislation could have been defeated, especially in view of the narrow

margin of victory of the reactionaries in the Senate. The dangerous political situation in the United States, therefore, imperatively demands that the A. F. of L., C.I.O. and Railroad Brotherhoods join hands nationally for united labor action in the fight against organized reaction. This should be a preliminary step toward the early establishment of all-around organic labor unity. Failure promptly to achieve united labor action means to gamble recklessly with the life of the labor movement and the future of American democracy. The present needless split in labor's ranks has already cost the labor movement very dearly; it must be ended at once.

Another great weakness of organized labor that must be cured is the practice of Red-baiting which is now so widely prevalent in official trade union circles. Red-baiting is the weapon of big business, of Wall Street, of developing American fascism. It is taken straight from the arsenal of the late unlamented Hitler. By spreading a thousand fantastic lies about the Communists, the reactionaries and their Red-baiting labor dupes build up a false Red bogey by which they frighten the people and distract their attention from their real enemy—big business. This enables the latter to put across its reactionary program with a minimum of democratic resistance, Red-baiting is the fascist technique for confusing, dividing and enslaving the people. Characteristically, Wall Street railroaded its infamous Taft-Hartley bill through Congress under cover of the worst campaign of Red-baiting in our nation's history. Fascism lives and grows on Red-baiting. Red-baiters in the labor movement do not and cannot fight fascism. On the contrary, they feed and cultivate fascism, for they are using its main weapon. The very purpose of Red-baiting is to hide the fascist danger and thus to make it easier for it to grow. Those labor leaders who are such eager Red-baiters are either consciously or unconsciously doing the work of Wall Street. They are weakening the trade unions and cutting the heart out of the workers' resistance to the reactionary danger. Also, they are sharpening the fascist axe for their own political necks. Henry Wallace is doing a major service to organized labor and the American people by his warnings against the deadly disease of Red-baiting.

THE WAR DANGER

A further element sapping the strength of the trade union movement and laying it wide open to Wall Street's attacks is the foolish support that trade union leaders are giving to President's Truman's foreign policy. For it is as plain as the nose on one's face that the Administration's so-called bi-partisan foreign policy is the policy of the Republican Party, of Wall Street, of the worst enemies of labor and the American nation. It is a war policy of imperialist world conquest and it violates flagrantly the national interest of our people.

It is a dangerous fact that Wall Street and the Truman Administration are actively preparing for war against the U.S.S.R. This is the meaning of the huge military budget of the government, the piling up of atomic bombs, the use of "dollar diplomacy" all over the world, the wild campaign of war mongering in this country.

Wall Street, in its aggressive offensive, has a two-sided program. One side is imperialist expansion, "dollar diplomacy" abroad, and the other is fascist-like reaction at home. The foreign phase of this twin policy of reaction is the drive to conquer the world, the so-called bi-partisan policy. This is the Truman doctrine which, in its more complete form, is the so-called Marshall plan. This world policy has as its reverse phase a reactionary regime here in the United States. It is impossible for organized labor to defeat the fascist-like domestic side of Wall Street's program while accepting its foreign side—the warlike offensive to establish world mastery. If it supports Wall Street's imperialism, organized labor would be half licked at the start in its efforts to protect democracy and American living standards, and to preserve world peace. The workers cannot defeat reaction at home if they support imperialism abroad. It is imperative, therefore, that the trade union leadership stop tagging along after Wall Street's phony bi-partisan imperialist war policy and develop a people's program of world peace and international collaboration. This is a historical "must" which, at its peril, organized labor dare not ignore.

Another grave weakness in the fight against reaction and fascism is the casual attitude with which organized labor looks

upon the present vicious attacks being made against the Negro people. Discrimination against Negro workers and veterans, and specially the ferocious lynchings in the South, are rapidly increasing, yet the trade unions are doing very little to halt this outrageous persecution. This is a big mistake, for which, if it is continued, labor will pay dearly. Reactionary Republican demagogues, promising relief to the Negroes, are trying to win their support in the 1948 elections, and not without some success. The Negroes, occupying a highly strategic position in many doubtful northern states, constitute a progressive force that labor cannot possibly afford to lose. Trade unionists must learn the elementary lesson that persecution of the Negroes is a blood brother to the Taft-Hartley law, and that both of these constitute blows of the reactionaries against American democracy in general. Negro rights are just as vital as trade union rights, and they must be no less militantly defended by the entire labor movement.

LABOR CANNOT RELY ON THE TWO OLD PARTIES

In addition to uniting the labor movement, to putting a stop to suicidal red-baiting, to developing a democratic peace policy, and to defending the rights of the harrassed Negro people, as indicated above, there are many other steps labor must take to modernize itself, to develop its full fighting force, and equip itself to defeat the fascist-like attacks being delivered against it by the powerful Wall Street capitalists. Among them these steps may be mentioned: (1) the development of a broad economic program, conceived in the interest of the whole American people and covering such matters as wages, prices, taxes, foreign loans, government expenditures, etc., a program which would lend great strength to organized labor's position in the nation; (2) the building of a strong trade union youth movement; (3) the development of a broad organization of women workers; (4) a drastic betterment of the trade union press, radio, and general educational activities; and (5) most important of all, the abandonment of the practice of parrot-like repetition of the capitalist free-enterprise slogans of the N.A.M. Organized labor must begin to think for itself, which can only be in a Marxian sense.

Finally, there is one more very vital need of organized labor, and without it no effective fight against reaction and fascism is possible in the United States. This is that the workers and their allies must stop trailing along after the Democratic and Republican Parties and go into politics on their own. The time is now more than ripe for the workers, together with the farmers, Negroes, veterans, intellectuals, youth, small businessmen and other democratic forces, to cut loose from the paralyzing influence of the two old parties of Wall Street and to launch a great new anti-fascist party.

It made sense for the workers to support the Democratic Party during the Roosevelt regime; for Roosevelt was a progressive and the workers made many important gains under his long Presidency. They vastly strengthened their trade unions and won much favorable legislation; the Negro people secured many concessions; and the American people, with our Russian and British allies, fought a successful war against fascism. But this is now all water over the dam. The Democratic Party no longer is playing a progressive role. It is dominated by Wall Street and is faithfully doing its bidding. The Democratic Party is supporting Wall Street's Republican warlike bipartisan policy of imperialism abroad and its reactionary program in this country. The anti-progressive character of the Democratic Party was clearly exposed when a majority of its members in Congress voted for the Taft-Hartley slave labor bill, which was the project of the National Association of Manufacturers. It will be disastrous if the workers continue to support this employer-controlled Party.

President Truman is not President Roosevelt. He should not be supported by labor. Truman is a reactionary and has betrayed every progressive policy that Roosevelt stood for. He is one of the most blatant imperialist jingoes in this country. His so-called Truman doctrine, now dolled up as the Marshall plan, is a war policy and a menace to world peace and democracy. Truman is trying to militarize our country and is otherwise playing the game of Wall Street. But he is clever enough to cover up his reactionary course by pretenses that he is following the progressive Roosevelt line.

TRUMAN HELPING PUT OVER WALL STREET'S PROGRAM

President Truman was largely responsible for the passage of the fascist-like Taft-Hartley slave labor bill. He helped to prepare the ground for it by creating anti-union sentiment in the country, by ruthlessly smashing the national strikes of the coal miners and railroad workers, and by clamoring for Congressional legislation to curb the labor unions. He could have defeated the Taft-Hartley bill had he utilized his leadership to mobilize the Democrats in Congress to vote against it. But he did not do this. Instead he worked both ends against the middle. He played up to the employers by letting the bill go through, and he fooled many gullible labor men by his formal veto of the bill. Roosevelt's former Secretary of the Interior, Harold L. Ickes, correctly exposed the tricky Truman policy, in the *New York Post* of June 30:

- "The evidence is clear that President Truman wanted to have a chance to veto the Taft-Hartley bill, but he also wanted the bill passed over his veto. The Democrats might have made the veto stick if they had really tried. In other words, the Administration was playing politics instead of fighting for labor."

The Democratic Party reactionaries are grooming Truman for their Presidential candidate for 1948, figuring that with his phony veto of the Taft-Hartley bill he has gotten the workers' votes in the bag. But organized labor should serve notice upon the Democratic king-makers that under no circumstances will the workers accept Truman as their candidate. In the most emphatic manner they should demand that the Democratic Party nominate an acceptable progressive, under the threat that otherwise they will put their own candidate in the field. A choice between a Democratic Truman and a Republican Dewey would be only a choice between a slower or a faster march toward reaction and fascism.

In any event, whether the Democratic Party nominates a progressive candidate or not, the workers and other demo-

cratic forces should begin at once to build a broad new people's party in this country. It would be supreme folly for the workers to further follow the Wall Street-controlled Democratic Party. The Democratic Party is no barrier against the dangerous fascism that is now beginning to sprout in our country, nor is President Truman. Quite the reverse, they are helping the growth of these fascist tendencies by confusing the workers and by demoralizing their fight against their real enemies—the trusts and corporations. The workers and their leaders, in this very decisive moment in our national history, must not pin their hopes on a reactionary Truman and his likes. That is just another way of breaking down the people's resistance to fascism in the United States.

After World War I, from 1919 to 1922, the trade unions in this country were subjected to a tremendous attack by the powerful trusts. This big assault could have been repelled had the conservative trade union leadership boldly united the ranks of labor and led the workers in an all-out defense. But these things were not done. Each national trade union made its separate fight against the united enemy, with the result that the unions one after another suffered catastrophic defeats. Great strikes were provoked by wage cuts and then broken by the bosses in nearly every industry. Consequently, the labor movement lost about one-third of its total membership and was sorely weakened on all fronts. As a result organized labor sank into a dozen years of the greatest decline in strength and fighting spirit since the days of its inception. Nor was it able to recover until the Roosevelt regime, in the middle thirties, made it possible to gain lost ground. This whole disaster could have been avoided had the labor leadership realized the danger and taken the very obvious precautions against it.

UNITED LABOR CAN DEFEAT THE FASCIST DANGER

Now, after World War II, organized labor is once more facing a great offensive of the Wall Street capitalists. Clearly this time the threat, that of a possible eventual fascism, is even more dangerous than that we faced after World War I. Dur-

ing the past twenty years humanity has learned to its cost what an unbounded tragedy fascism is. Yet this is the monstrous thing that now is beginning to menace this country. Monopoly capitalist reaction in these years tends toward fascist developments, and we must be wide awake to them in our country.

Already by the Republican victory in the elections of 1946 and by the passage of the infamous Taft-Hartley bill, the workers have suffered two heavy and needless defeats. Even as after World War I, these defeats could have been avoided by the adoption of a few common sense measures to unite the workers' forces. And how will it be from here on in? Will the leaders of labor do as they did after World War I—that is, cling to their ineffective policies and allow the workers to suffer fresh and even more disastrous defeats? Will they, by their neglect to adopt the vital measures recited above, risk victory by the Republicans and Tory Democratic reactionaries in 1948 and gradually to drag our country into the fatal swamps of fascism and war? Or will they, learning from the costly experiences of the past, realize the danger of fascist reaction, take the vigorous necessary steps to counteract it, and lead the workers to new victories?

The responsibilities of the leaders of the A. F. of L., C.I.O. and Railroad Brotherhoods are now indeed heavy ones. These leaders, in order to meet the existing dangerous situation, have to realize the central fact that, to insure victory, their present policies must be drastically overhauled and improved. The workers and their allies are potentially very powerful, far more powerful than the capitalists. Properly led, they can defeat the reactionary aims of Wall Street, they can wipe the Taft-Hartley law from the statute books, they can utterly destroy budding fascism in this country, they can preserve world peace.

The workers and their allies are in a mood to fight. Many signs indicate this, including the tremendous strike movement of the post-war period, the far-reaching and spontaneous hostility to universal military training and other measures to militarize the country, the condemnation far and wide of the warlike Truman doctrine, the widespread mass resistance

to the Taft-Hartley bill, extensive political activities of the Negroes in both the North and South, many progressive developments among the farmers, and the spectacular growth of the Wallace-for-President movement. These developments are signs of a profound democratic sentiment among the people. The workers and their allies can win the victory over Wall Street if given even a measure of sound leadership. But to beat fascist-minded reaction in the United States will take a real fight. It is a fight that requires militant leadership and progressive policies.

Several months ago the Communist Party, warning of the need to unite the labor movement in order to beat back the legislative attacks in Congress, put out the slogan "United Labor Action—or Else." The leaders of labor ignored this timely warning and did not develop united labor action. Consequently, the workers got the "or else"—that is, the Taft-Hartley slave labor law. Now the workers face an even more urgent "or else" alternative. They must either promptly develop effective fighting policies, or they will face something far worse than the Taft-Hartley law, namely, a dangerous growth of the fascist and war threats in the United States.

Fascism is a menace that can be neglected only at the workers' grave peril. Hence the workers should see to it that their leaders take the indicated necessary steps to crush the danger in the bud. With a united labor movement and progressive policies, the fight against developing fascism in the United States must be pushed intelligently, unceasingly, and with all the strength possessed by the trade union movement and its allies. If this is done, victory will be won by the workers and their democratic allies, and the United States will swiftly pass on to higher levels of democracy, prosperity and friendly international collaboration than it has ever known.

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