

Earl Browder --- Socialist at 16

A COMMUNIST LEADER'S EDUCATION



Earl Browder (right) rolls a cigarette (of union-made tobacco) while in conversation with Charles Stadtfeldt, Communist candidate for Governor of Indiana. The two were photographed in Gary after one of the most successful Communist meetings ever held in this steel center. Later Stadtfeldt was jailed along with Browder in Terre Haute.

By M. J. Olgin

This is the second part of a series by M. J. Olgin, Communist leader and editor of the *Morning Freiheit*, telling the life story of Earl Browder, Communist candidate for the Presidency.

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There was a big movement throughout the Middle West just at that time, largely around the weekly Socialist paper, *The Appeal to Reason*, published in Girard, Kansas. The panic of 1907 had shaken the country to its foundations. Earl Browder, who was born in 1891, was just 16 when the crash came. All the banks closed for months, and there was no currency, except local paper money issued by local banks and business houses. The masses underwent great hardships. There was unemployment in the cities, poverty on the farms. People began to question the causes of the suffering.

Young Browder saw in the crisis only the corroboration of the socialist understanding of society. It was the system, he said, that was to blame! Poverty among riches. Hunger in the midst of abundance. Men and women ready to work but barred from the machines and the raw materials that they themselves had created and that were now lying idle. Was it not just as he had pictured when reading *The Communist Manifesto* and other Socialist books? Truly, the founders

of Socialism understood the nature of society, and their proposed solution was the only one that could make such panics impossible.

SOCIALIST STUDY

One name was particularly dear to young Browder in those early formative years, the name of the publisher, Charles Kerr of Chicago. Kerr published a number of Socialist classics, translated from other languages. Here you find Engels' *Landmarks of Scientific Socialism*—the American edition of a part of the famous *Anti-Duehring*; Marx' *Value, Price and Profit*, and the book that forms the key for all scientific Socialism, *The Communist Manifesto* by Marx and Engels. If it is possible at all to trace the influence on a man's mind, it must be said that the Socialist classics exercised the greatest influence on the mind of Earl Browder.

Work, study, and a social idea—these three elements blended to shape the personality of Earl Browder. He knew the life of the toilers, not only in the city but also on the farms. Wichita itself was at that time half city, half farming center. Earl's father was half school teacher, half farmer. Earl himself later worked for a farmers' cooperative. From his own experience Browder acquired that first-hand knowledge of city and farm life which is so essential for the understanding of toiling America. The experience was digested and turned into, an active power under the influence of

a correct analysis of society and a sound social idea.

IN THE LABOR MOVEMENT

As a member of the Socialist Party during those pre-war years, one inevitably got in touch with organized labor. Browder early became familiar with the problems of the trade union movement. He was himself for years a member of the Bookkeepers' Union, later became its president and as such was in the very center of the organized labor movement of Kansas City.

There was a controversy within the Socialist Party around the great leader, William Haywood, who in many respects was more to the Left than the leadership of the Socialist Party. William Haywood was the organizer of the Industrial Workers of the World which at that time was a revolutionary organization. At the same time Haywood, loved and respected by hundreds of thousands of American workers, wished to retain membership in the Socialist Party and on its Executive Committee to which he had been elected. The leadership of the Socialist Party began to flounder. It excluded Bill Haywood. That was a warning to Browder. With that decisiveness and quiet strength which is his own, Browder decides to step out of the Socialist Party.

THE BREAK WITH THE S. P.

Here we have one of the most outstanding characteristics of Earl Browder—his unwillingness to rest on achievements, to take things for granted, to sink into a routine. His is the analytical mind. He keeps on

British Labor Asks Probe Of Blackshirts

50 Fascists Invade Jewish Sections of London in Reprisal

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erate purpose of stimulating civil disorder and racial strife."

In her opening address, Mrs. Jennie L. Adamson, chairman of the conference, said that the plight of democracy is responsible for Europe's troubles.

"It is the old European powder magazine," she said. "If and when a match lights it the whole world would catch fire. Why? Because the greater part of Europe, Europe from the reformation to the French Revolution, put back the clock of civilization and turned its face toward the dark ages of tyranny, persecution, poverty and ignorance."

50 British Blackshirts Attack London Jews

LONDON, Oct. 5.—British fascists went on a second wild rampage in as many days today when fifty blackshirts smashed windows and store fronts in the Jewish section in London's East End.

The invasion of East End today was the follow-up of yesterday's clash between fascists and anti-fascists. Approximately 100 persons were arrested as Mosley tried to stage a "dress rehearsal" of a fascist thrust for power.

Chanting "They Shall Not Pass," thousands of Laborites, Communists and other anti-fascists barred the way as the blackshirts started a barrage of sticks and stones.

Moseley dismissed his band after making threats and charging that the British Government "surrendered to Jewish corruption."

examining the theory in the light of the new facts. He keeps on studying the facts to make his theory more robust, more convincing. If something is wrong in the organization he works with, or in his own personal work, he fearlessly brings it to light and proposes a remedy.

Once he realized that there was no remedy within the limits of the organization he considered his own. He did not hesitate to quit. This requires courage. It is not an easy thing for a man to sever his relations with the organization in which he has worked for many years. This means breaking with friends, with old associates. It often means a break in one's own life. Browder was not afraid to break with the Socialist Party when he realized that the Party was wrong.

Where to go? There was at that time within the American Federation of Labor a Left-wing organization known as the Syndicalist League of North America. In 1912 Earl Browder joined that league.

When Browder joins an organization, he never asks what job he is to hold. He does the work and that is sufficient for him. He never asks for an official position. The satisfaction of work well done is his reward. In the Syndicalist League he took over, almost as a matter of course, the care of its magazine, *The Toller*, which was published for two years. Browder was editor of the magazine, although unofficially. He wrote half the articles for every issue, read the proofs, licked stamps, carried the copies to the post office, and generally supervised the entire magazine. It was in connection with *The Toller* that we see Earl Browder for the first time as a revolutionary journalist, a writer, whose words are clear, earnest, incisive, and simple.