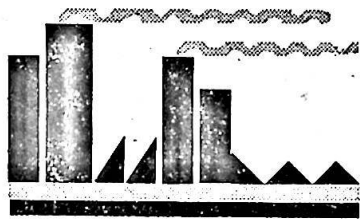


**Workers,
Defend
Your
Unions!**



by WILLIAM Z. FOSTER 1¢


WORKERS, DEFEND YOUR UNIONS!

By William Z. Foster

Workers, defend your unions! The trade unions in the United States are now under the heaviest legislative attack in their entire history. At last accounts there were no less than 212 bills in Congress designed to injure the unions in one way or another. Many state legislatures are also cluttered up with anti-labor legislation. This anti-union barrage constitutes a blow not only against the trade unions, but also against the very foundations of American democracy. To undermine the labor movement, as the adoption of all or any considerable part of this legislation would do, would be a long stride towards fascism. The attack on the trade unions, together with the orgy of Red-baiting and warmongering now going on, are sinister signs of the growing fascist movement in the United States.

The forces behind the present anti-union drive in Congress, in the newspapers, and on the radio, are the great Wall Street corporations, the profit-grabbers, the inflationists, the oppressors of the Negro people, and the instigators of every form of reaction. Their chief political tools are the Hoovers, Tafts, Deweys and Vandenberg. Their main organizations are the Republican Party, and the National Association of Manufacturers.

These reactionaries want to cut the heart out of the labor movement, which is the workers' main protection against high prices, against rent robbers, against super-exploitation, and against political tyranny. The aim of the big capitalists and their agents in Congress is to re-establish the open shop in order to dictate wages and working conditions as they see fit. They long for a return of the "good old days", before Roosevelt, when they could do as they pleased in the industries, in the government, and in the country generally.

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The employers want to smash the trade unions, so they can grab off even more fabulous profits, so they can secure a tighter stranglehold on our country, so they can more readily militarize the United States, and so they can more effectively push their imperialist program of world domination.

The workers must wake up to the dangers contained in the many anti-labor bills now before Congress. This is clear from the mention of even a few of the more dangerous of the bills:

Senator Ball's proposal to abolish all forms of the union shop, including the check-off, maintenance of membership clauses, and the preferential union shop, would re-introduce the slave-like open shop and the yellow-dog contract. Ball aims to throw back the labor movement a full generation.

Senator Ferguson's bill to set up labor courts to handle wage disputes would do away with collective bargaining, render the unions helpless, and put the workers at the mercy of biased judges. Long years of experience has taught the workers that the courts, as now manned, are not their friends.

The O'Daniels bill to repeal the Wagner Act would again give the employers the power to campaign against the unions in their plants and to terrorize workers from joining any labor organization. This bill would rob organized labor of the greatest achievement it won during the Roosevelt regime.

The Smith bill to incorporate the trade unions under Federal law would give crooked politicians the legal right to control the officials, policies and membership of organized labor. It would be a long step towards the Mussolini type of government-controlled unions. Ever since the beginning of labor unionism in this country the workers have fought resolutely against such legal incorporation.

The Case Bill, among its many dangerous features, would knife the Norris-LaGuardia Act and re-introduce the use of the injunction in labor disputes. This would have tragic results for organized labor and would negate 50 years of labor struggle.

Senator Ball's proposal to abolish industry-wide collective bargaining, if enacted into law, would reduce the labor unions to the position of helpless, local company unions.

Several other bills proposing to make the trade unions

subject to the anti-trust laws would cancel the labor legislation of generations and destroy the unions as free organizations.

Still other bills would limit or prohibit political action by the trade unions. They constitute an attempt to disfranchise the workers politically and to keep them tied to the two capitalist parties. Their enactment would be a great detriment to the labor movement.

President Truman's recent call upon Congress for legislation to prohibit secondary boycotts and jurisdictional strikes would be a dangerous invasion by the government into the life of the unions. The boycott is a legitimate labor weapon of long standing, and as for jurisdictional strikes which are, at most, only a minor evil, their abolition is the job of the unions, not of the government.

The bills of Senators Capeheart, Wiley and others, designed to prohibit portal-to-portal pay, or to confiscate such pay by special taxes would deny the workers pay for work done for the bosses.

The joint proposal of five Republican Congressmen to force compulsory arbitration upon the workers would deprive organized labor of the right to strike. It would make the trade unions powerless under the control of unfair arbitrators. This bill, like the others now before Congress, smells of Hitlerism.

The outlawing of strikes in public utilities, as proposed, would put these workers in the category of second class citizens and deprive them of their economic power.

The proposed prohibition of so-called sympathy strikes would rob the workers of a vital right which they have enjoyed for 100 years.

The proposed outlawing of mass picketing by the Congress reactionaries would strip the workers of one of their most potent weapons against strike-breaking.

These anti-union bills, and the scores of others of a similar nature now pending in Congress, constitute an attempt by the Wall Street open shoppers to turn back the clock of history. While the trade unions in all other countries are making gigantic progress and are the mainstay of democracy in their respective countries, the corporations in the United States are

insolently trying to rob American labor unions of the rights they have had for generations. They would reduce the unions to impotency. And worst of all, by weakening the labor movement, they would force our country in the direction of fascism. The Congressional threat to the unions is a threat against our nation's democracy.

It is a brazen lie, the capitalist charge that the trade unions in this country are too strong and must be curbed. On the contrary, the stronger the trade unions are, the stronger, too, is American democracy. The danger to our country comes not from strong trade unions, but from over-powerful, profit-hungry, corporations and trusts, which are the organizers of the present anti-unionism campaign. These greedy outfits are also the poison source of every reactionary development in our country.

It is also a barefaced falsehood, the assertion that the unions were responsible for the recent wave of strikes. These strikes were caused by the swift rise in the cost of living. This increase in living costs was brought about deliberately by the profit-gouging employers and monopolists who killed the O.P.A. and abolished price controls. By defending their wage rates the workers are fighting for the economic well-being of the whole American people. High living standards by the masses mean better times economically in general. They are also the only way to minimize the devastating effects of periodic economic crises.

The trade unions must be strengthened, not weakened. Organized labor, in the interests of the workers and of American democracy, must go forward, not backward. The unions should strengthen themselves and our national democracy by organizing the millions of unorganized, by healing the split between the A. F. of L. and the C.I.O., by forming a great, new, anti-monopoly, anti-fascist people's party, by smashing the K.K.K. and every other fascist movement in our country, by enacting into law the substance of Roosevelt's New Economic Bill of Rights, by forcing the Government to adopt a foreign policy of peaceful collaboration with the Big Five powers, by preparing for a great people's victory in the elections of 1948, and by developing a mass perspective of Socialism in the United States.

The trade unions have cost the workers generations of bitter struggle and suffering. Thousands of hard strikes have been waged in order to establish the unions. Millions of workers and their families have starved so as to win the right of collective bargaining. Innumerable workers have gone to jail or even died to build the American labor movement. The trade unions are not only the main protection of the workers' living standards and of democracy generally under capitalism; they are also fundamental organizations for the eventual building of socialism. The workers are not going to stand idly by while the parasitic millionaires and their political agents in Congress cut the labor movement to pieces. Let no one be mistaken, the American working class will fight to the last for its trade unions!

Workers, rally to the defense of your trade unions! The labor movement, the working class, the whole American people must awaken to the danger in the fascist-like attack now being made upon the unions by the reactionaries in Congress, by the vulture press and by fascist-like radio commentators. The workers and their political allies, the farmers, the Negro people, the veterans, the professionals, the youth, the women, must unitedly deal a crushing blow to the open shop reactionaries. The National Association of Manufacturers must not be allowed to become the slave driver of American workers.

This fight against organized reaction must not be left simply to top labor officials, especially as the Greens, Wolls, Dubinskys, Lewis' and Hutchesons, have already surrendered to reaction. **The whole labor movement should go into action at once. The workers should beat back the anti-union offensive of Wall Street by a mighty counter-attack of their own.** All over the country trade unionists are waking up to the danger that confronts them. This developing movement must become a veritable avalanche of resistance. Labor, once awakened, can smash every attack of the union-busters in Congress. After World War I the capitalists, repudiating their glib wartime promises to organized labor, dealt the trade unions devastating blows. But they will not be able to repeat these reactionary successes after this war. The 15,000,000-strong labor movement is the greatest achievement won by the working class

under the Roosevelt regime, and this time the workers will know how to defend it!

Let no worker fall victim to the foolish belief that the reactionaries in Congress generously take the unions for granted and don't want to, or don't dare to cripple legally the great trade union movement. Of course they will dare it, if they can. Don't be fooled by the promises of the Tafts and others that they will adopt only so-called mild curbs on labor. They are out to deal organized labor a serious defeat. And the only thing that can prevent this is an aroused working class. The reactionaries will go as far with their anti-labor legislation as the workers let them go. Of that, we may be certain. If the workers and the other democratic forces remain passive, then the Republican-Southern poll-tax Democratic majority in Congress will surely adopt legislation that will do great harm to the workers, to the labor movement, and to American democracy. **The union-smashers must be stopped cold.**

Let there be no illusions that President Truman will shield the trade unions from the open shop attacks in Congress. Truman is an appeaser of capitalist reaction. He has flagrantly betrayed the Roosevelt program, both in his domestic and foreign policies. The President's own proposals for anti-labor legislation, if enacted, would be highly injurious to the labor movement. Moreover, his plans to put a bridle on labor have given the green light for even worse legislation from the open reactionaries. Organized labor, with the support of its allies, must therefore defeat Truman's anti-labor legislation, as well as that proposed by the Republican-Tory Democrat camp.

United action by the whole labor movement is the way to defeat the anti-labor unionists in Congress. The A. F. of L., the C.I.O. and the Railroad Brotherhoods, faced by this great danger, must lay aside their quarrels with one another and join hands in a common fight against the open shoppers. On a city, state and national basis there should be united action by labor to sweep back the avalanche of anti-labor bills in Congress. Every union, everywhere, should adopt resolutions of indignation, union committees should visit Representatives and Senators, mass lobbies should be sent to Washington, protest meetings should be held, citizens' committees should be organ-

ized, and if necessary, one-day local protest strikes should be prepared. The workers and the broad masses of the people should unitedly let the union busters in Congress, who are tools of the corporations, learn by vigorous action that they are not going to permit them to wreck the labor movement. The workers must develop a broad all-union people's movement in defense of the unions. There is no other course except to submit to crushing defeat. For the unions it's a case of **UNITED LABOR ACTION—OR ELSE!**

Workers, stand your ground! Your bread and butter, the welfare of your families, the democratic future of our country are at stake! Don't yield an inch to the union-busters! Let your motto be "They shall not pass!" With united ranks, give the power-drunk monopolists a well-deserved lesson! With your irresistible power teach the Wall Street moguls that America is not going back to small and powerless trade unions, but forward to an ever-stronger, more active, and politically-minded labor movement. Defeat every anti-labor bill in Congress! Defend the trade unions!

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