

What Mr. Thomas Proposes

by Ben Gitlow

Norman Thomas says: "Violence arising as a result of national war and breaking into class war would result in such a catastrophe that I have no idea what would emerge."

That is a frank and honest statement. It is the kernel of the Norman Thomas position. According to Thomas the greatest calamity would be for the workers to turn a capitalist (national) war into a class war (proletarian revolution).

Norman Thomas views as a catastrophe an armed working class using its power to make a revolution to wipe out capitalist rule. Certainly that would be a terrible catastrophe for Norman Thomas. He would have to accept working class rule or suffer the doom of the capitalists. He would not be free as a bird sitting on a limb to chirp all day long the glories of capitalist democracy, while millions starve in the midst of plenty, while the sound of policemen's clubs and the rattle of bullets claim the worker victims in the battle for bread, while motherhood is robbed of its joys, while the flower of working class youth is stunted, dwarfed, crippled and distorted for life in capitalist industry, while the masses of workers are deadened intellectually, kept in ignorance and polluted by capitalist agencies of religion, school and press, while prostitution, graft, corruption, dishonesty are regarded as virtues, and loyalty to the poor and honesty of conviction is a crime. The essence of capitalism is ruthless violence against the working class. Its logic is the actual, the true, the real catastrophe, hell of life for workers during so-called capitalist "peace"-time and a hell of death during capitalist war-time.

Because Norman Thomas loves capitalism so much, because it permits him to weave phrases and to offer them as constructive, wise proposals, as a way out of Socialism thru revolution, Norman Thomas, the "Socialist", rejects Marxism, rejects the class struggle, rejects a working class revolution against capitalism.

His "Way Out"

Instead he offers to the workers of America his own program. Let us examine his way out for America.

Now can one expect Norman Thomas to work out a program for the working class of the United States when his whole conception of the average American is a petty bourgeois conception, the conception of Main Street, of the small business men. He writes of the Calvin Coolidge "prosperity" period the following: "The average American still preferred working others to productive labor." Is the average American an employer of labor, a business man, or a worker who engages in productive labor until he is incapacitated or dies? Mr. Thomas evidently does not speak of the average American who is a worker but of the average American is a small merchant or manufacturer, who hopes thru the exploitation of labor to get where the big capitalists are. Norman Thomas's program reflects the interests of these "average Americans", these would-be big capitalists.

Norman Thomas begins with the idea that the workers can gain more thru American capitalist democracy than thru working class action and revolution. To prove his contention he makes the following statement:

"Here we can at least point out that even in plutocratic America political democracy has acquired without revolution the right to impose a most unwelcome income tax on the rich which opens the door to some real shift in economic power and privilege."

Before American capitalist democracy, political democracy as Norman Thomas calls it, adopted the income tax, European capitalist governments, of kings, emperors and Kaisers with autocratic power, had found it expedient and necessary to adopt income tax measures. But in no instance has there come as a result of this measure some real shift in economic power and privilege. The income tax didn't stop the growth of millionaires and lessen poverty in the United States. The Rockefellers and Morgans remain. In spite of the income tax they have become more powerful and wealthier. The governmental power has not shifted away from the specially privileged. It is today a more rapacious, more reactionary, more brutal strike-breaking capitalist force than it was when the income tax was first passed. But if this is not such a convincing proof of the effectiveness of capitalist democracy, Norman Thomas offers you this one:

"Without straining unduly the far from perfect analogy between the struggle of an unprivileged sex and a somewhat similar struggle of dispossessed classes and nations, it may be said that the emancipation of women without war—save in a rhetorical sense, is worth consideration by those who would dispose of the possibility of peace simply on the basis of the unwillingness of a privileged group to renounce power and privilege."

The above reminds me of the little adage: If at first you don't succeed, try, try, again. Norman Thomas wants to say: If men gave women the vote without a fight, then we can expect the capitalists to give up their privileges without a fight. But even women suffrage was not gained without a violent struggle. But women suffrage did not involve the taking away of privileges from the capitalists. It did not challenge the economic base of capitalism. To expect the capitalists to give up their privileged position without a fight is to fly in the face of history and glaring facts. A strike today for a few cents more pay, for shorter hours, for recognition of the union, becomes a veritable battle field with tear bombs, machine guns, Cossacks, police, militia. In Pennsylvania today

the soil is red with the blood of coal miners. No, Norman Thomas, you offer no convincing arguments that the so-called democracy of the U. S. government can be used effectively for the workers against capitalism. It is the hub of the capitalist wheel keeping it together. It is its most effective agency of terrorism, suppression and violence against the workers in the maintenance of its power and privilege. The capitalist government of the U. S. will fight to the last ditch to maintain the power, privileges and rule of the capitalists.

Mild Liberalism

Norman Thomas is for consumers co-operatives, for government ownership of certain basic industries, for the single tax, for free trade thru a gradual reduction of tariffs, for income and inheritance taxes. He is for the attainment of these reforms in a mild gradual manner. He is also for the recognition of the Soviet Union, for the United States becoming part of the League of Nations and for the wiping out of war debts. There is nothing Socialist in his program. The liberals can accept it. LaFollette is even more radical.

Writing of public ownership Norman Thomas expresses himself as follows: "If it comes peacefully it will—indeed it must—come gradually." Norman Thomas is in no hurry for Socialism and it must come peacefully without revolution to have his support. He states further that he is for buying the industries from the capitalists; he is for compensating the capitalists. He puts it this way:

"After all a great many owners are

guilty of no worse crime than playing the game by the established rules and exercising a function by permission of society which society has not exercised."

Norman Thomas is deeply concerned about the capitalists. They played the game. The must be paid. Who will compensate the workers for their misery, poverty, for their crippled and killed in industry, for the ruthlessness of the class war, and for the millions crushed and slaughtered in the greed for profits and in capitalist war?

But Norman Thomas is not concerned about the workers whose lives have gone into the building of industry; he is concerned about the capitalist and says:

"Purchase of great industries will cost money but at an immediate saving to the public."

The political reforms advocated by Norman Thomas show him up as a very mild progressive, a really conservative liberal. Al Smith could run on this program with the endorsement of Raskob of General Motors and Owen D. Young of General Electric.

Norman Thomas wants the election of president by popular vote. He is against the abolition of the United States Supreme Court. He writes concerning this outstanding capitalist institution:

"Just how to amend the constitution so as to limit the power of the Supreme Court is a matter for more discussion by more groups than it has had."

(Concluded in the next issue)

The "New Turn" in Trade Union Line

TWO LETTERS FROM THE R. I. L. U.

by A. P.

The diplomatic "unity drive" being conducted under the direct inspiration of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, in Germany as well as in the United States, is primarily based upon the widely heralded "new turn" in trade union work. And yet such is the contradictory character of bureaucratic "self-criticism" that even this "new turn" has to develop in an antagonistic form: "unofficially" it is zealously propagated in order to head off the criticisms of the Opposition and to break its ranks; officially the "new turn" is denied and the documents connected with it are even suppressed.

No better illustration of the essentially superficial character of this "new turn" and of the utterly unprincipled manner in which it is being carried thru can be found than the recent scandal centering around the letters of the Red International of Labor Unions to the Communist Parties of Germany and the United States of America.

The Suppression of the Documents

On May 18 a full-page letter of the R.I.L.U. was published in the *Daily Worker*. The Letter dealt with very important problems—as important as Comintern documents can deal with these days. It sharply criticized the work and the results of the work of the T.U.U.L. and the Party. And yet this Letter has not yet (two months later) been published in the *Freiheit*, the Jewish organ of the Party, read by most of the Party trade union workers. In the two months time not a single article has appeared in the entire Party press, commenting on, explaining or dealing with this letter of the R.I.L.U. in any form. It came—it was printed—and that's all! As a matter of fact, it can be safely said that the good portion of the Party membership is still ignorant of the contents of the letter, if not of its very existence.

To the German T.U.U.L. (called the R.G.O.) a letter also came from the R. I. L. U. For two weeks it was suppressed and communicated only to leading functionaries. Then when the Opposition paper, the *Arbeiterpolitik*, published a summary of the contents of this letter on June 21, the *Rote Fahne* finally published this letter—but with a totally altered introduction, changing entirely the direction of criticism and the intent of the letter. To date, the original letter has not yet been made public in the Party press in spite of open demands of the membership.

Such shameless and bureaucratic stifling of the necessary means of political clarification and correction the Party have rarely indeed been seen in the Comintern.

The Content of the Letters

What, then, do these Letters say that they have been dealt with in such a manner?

1. The American Letter cannot hide the practical collapse of Communist trade union work under the new trade union line. "The revolutionary unions and the T. U. U. L. have been declining in numbers and have lost considerable positions in the ranks of the working class during recent months". In other words, in a period of great objective possibilities, which the Letter emphasizes, loss in membership and influence! The German Letter is a little less frank. It also emphasizes the good objective conditions "The objective conditions are such to drive the workers to us", and it also refers to the "great weaknesses of our movement", to the tremendous disproportion between the influence of the R.G.O. and that of the reformists despite their

continuous betrayals. Even the "famous" Ruhr and Berlin strikes, once the proud examples of "independent leadership," are now mercilessly criticized. The situation is pretty bad indeed, it is made clear.

2. The chief point of criticism in both of these letters is the question of work in the reactionary unions. "Work in the reformist unions has almost completely disappeared," bluntly states the American Letter. "Work in the reformist and other reactionary unions has not only not increased but on the contrary has diminished," declares the German Letter in the same vein. In the functionary circles of the R. G. O.—we are informed—there have appeared tendencies which regard work in the reformist unions as a "stage already passed." In the mass trade unions the reactionary leaders have a free hand; in spite of their repeated capitulation to the capitalists, only the feeblest organized resistance is manifested against them. The official Communists have deserted the mass trade unions!

3. And what are the reasons for this absolutely disastrous situation? Not the leadership of the R.I.L.U. and its false trade union course are to blame—no, of course not! No! the R.I.L.U. and Comintern leaderships were and are correct—the official trade union course was and is correct. Only—members and functionaries of the T.U.U.L. (and the R.G.O.) have failed to carry thru the course correctly—because of "right" and "left" deviations, as is explained to us in detail in the German Letter. And so the buck is passed and the top leadership and its policies remain infallible!

4. But what must now be done to pull the T.U.U.L. (and the R.G.O.) from out of the swamp into which they have gotten themselves? The Letters explain: "More intensive work must be done in the reactionary trade unions!" But—may be asked—exactly the same phrase is to be found in the X Plenum resolution, in the resolutions of the various presidiums of the E.C.C.I., in the XI Plenum resolution and in the letters and resolutions of the Comintern and the R.I.L.U. What good will one more repetition of the old formula do? To this question there is no answer. Merely to ask it brands you as a "right winger" and "renegade"!

The "New Turn" and the Old Line

But the "new turn" propaganda goes on! See—we are told "unofficially"—the Party is correcting its line; your criticisms are being adopted. Of course not all at once—but what can you expect? Why not get back into the Party and help the new turn" along?

Is the Party correcting its trade union line? Let us see:

1. The fundamental tactical difference between the Comintern and the International Communist Opposition on the

THE wind has practically dropped out of the sails of the stock spurt caused by the Hoover Debt and Reparation Moratorium Plan. This was shown by the fall instead of rise of stock prices when the Franco-American agreement was reached on the Hoover proposal. Steel operations are still falling and no signs of a rise are in sight. June unfilled orders for steel fell by 141,129 from the previous month. Bank clear-