

Norman Thomas 'Abhors War'

by Ben Gitlow

Norman Thomas proclaims himself above everything else an apostle of peace. He may consider himself a Socialist but he wants you not to forget that he is a peace-loving Socialist. He just abhors war. He will not tolerate any kind of violence even for social ends. He is for peace first, last and all the time. Let us examine this Socialist dove of peace in order to determine what his pacifism really is.

Norman Thomas writes in his book, *America's Way Out*, as follows:

"When an audience in New York cheers Communist predictions of inevitable war it presents a problem in social pathology rather than a demonstration of revolutionary tactics."

Really a very interesting statement. If one maintains that the present system of capitalism, world imperialism, leads inevitably to war, then, according to Norman Thomas, he is a case for the hospitals. And if more than one believes in the inevitability of war under imperialism then it is a problem of social disease. In other words, if Norman Thomas did not want to use polite language, he would have written the above statement as follows: All those who believe that war to-day is inevitable are crazy and should be sent to the lunatic asylum.

THE CONFUSION OF PACIFISM

As a social diagnostician, Norman Thomas is confused and contradictory. How can Norman Thomas subscribe to the above quotation in the face of the following from the same book:

"There are intelligent men who believe that wars—great wars—are inevitable—peace, I believe is possible. But even the most optimistic among us can scarcely look at the world about us and say peace is certain."

Poor Norman Thomas! How will he extricate himself from the maze of his puzzling intellectual flings into logic. According to Norman Thomas if a Communist says war is inevitable he is a lunatic, and a Communist audience a pathological case. Still the same Norman Thomas says: "There are intelligent men who believe that wars—great wars—are inevitable . . ."

Which is it, Norman Thomas? Are the Communists who believe in the inevitability of war under imperialism intelligent or are the intelligent men crazy because they believe in the same things the Communists do?

But that is not all! Norman Thomas himself is not so positive. He says: "I believe peace is possible!"—but he has his doubts and is not so certain about it.

The pacifism of Norman Thomas has gotten him into a muddle. That would not be so bad if it would be confined only to Norman Thomas. Norman Thomas is a political leader. As such he is consciously trying with his pacifism to hide the real facts from the workers and to befuddle their minds.

IS WAR INEVITABLE?

Is war inevitable under imperialism to-day? It is! Every imperialist country is armed to the teeth. The military preparations going on are for war not for peace. The preparations are for great wars, world wars. The character of the present imperialist order is that it is almost always at war. War in China, war in Egypt, war in Asia Minor, war in India, war in Nicaragua, etc., etc. War not peace characterizes the present situation. Is peace possible under imperialism? Categorically, no! Imperialism is based upon plunder and war. Imperialism is the climax of the capitalist competitive system based upon the exploitation and expropriation of the toiling masses. It divides the earth among the imperialist powers. The struggle between them for the booty of imperialist expansion and exploitation leads inevitably to war.

Concerning these questions and their answer all Communists, all true Socialists, have no doubts. They recognize the ugly facts and all they imply for the workers and toiling masses who supply the human material that is agonized, butchered and destroyed in imperialist carnage. Only by recognizing the fact, not by running away from it, can the workers be prepared, organized and mobilized to resist imperialist war. Not only to resist but to turn this resistance into revolutionary action for the abolition of imperialism, thus doing away with the causes, the inevitability of war!

THE PACIFISM OF NORMAN THOMAS

Preparing the workers to resist imperialist war is wrong, is lunacy according to Norman Thomas. The ideal of peace is so beautiful to the pacifists. But if you declare to the workers peace is only then possible when the workers have destroyed capitalism, have wiped out imperialism, have wiped out the system of society that leads to war, then you are shattering the ideals of peace and, if you are a Communist, you are a pathological case.

However, the pacifism of Norman Thomas, like the pacifism of Woodrow Wilson, is based upon full support to imperialism and hence is bound, if followed, to leave the workers and toiling masses helpless before the devouring imperialist war-demon.

The imperialist powers behind pacifist slogans, conferences, good will tours, etc. are feverishly preparing for the eventuality of war. The imperialist powers endeavor to hide their militaristic war moves behind the curtain of pacifism. The most horrible life-destroying, men-wrecking machines and plans are being devised for the future wars in the name of peace. These detestable, hypocritical moves

of the imperialist war lords are greeted by Norman Thomas as follows:

"Nevertheless it is still possible to affirm that the struggle for peace, at least between nations capable of waging the most devastating sort and size of war, has some encouraging aspects."

This is a very definite statement to the effect that the countries capable of waging the most devastating war are for peace. The great imperial giants are notably the United States, Great Britain, Japan and France. These countries are working overtime preparing for war. Norman Thomas sees in these imperial powers, encouraging aspects for peace. Such sweet music does Norman Thomas play to lull the unsuspecting victims to sleep. Let us look only at some of the encouraging signs.

Mr. Hoover said at the meeting of the International Chamber of Commerce:

"The world expenditure on all arms is now nearly five billion dollars yearly, an increase of about 70% over that previous to the great war. We stand to-day with nearly 5,500,000 men actively under arms and 20,000,000 more in reserves."

Encouraging aspects, Mr. Thomas! Looks like the world under imperialism is headed for peace, even if they have to fight like hell for it.

Says the *Literary Digest* of May 30 on "Uncle Sam's Peace Time Plan for War":

"Embodying the lessons learned in the last conflict it provides for swift mobilization of the nation's man-power and for an equitable distribution of the economic burden of war."

The *New York Times* reports: "Emergency war department plans for the mobilization of an army of 4,000,000 men thru conscription."

The *New York Tribune* says concerning the plans:

"The present skeleton force of 118,000 men in the regular army would be increased to 4,000,000 men in six field armies and supporting troops within a year of 7,000,000 more draft registrants to draw upon if necessary."

Very encouraging aspects for peace, Norman Thomas, the war plans of capitalist America calling for an army in one year thru conscription of 11,000,000 men! That is what I call feeding them to the jaws of the War God Mars and not to the Dove of Peace. U. S. imperialism rests upon its armed forces and prospers only thru recourse to arms. Its competition in a narrowing, contracting world market leads to clashes for world domination with other imperialist powers thru war.

But here is another assumption by Norman Thomas. He writes:

"The deadliness of modern war may be a deterrent, but fear is and has been as

likely to produce war as peace."

Note it is not the economic system, the system of imperialism that produces war but fear. If the imperialist countries would only not fear one another, then they could go on with their robbery, plunder, exploitation, enslavement and competition peacefully. The cannons could be melted, the armies and navies demobilized, and we could all live in an idyllic world.

THE "NEW REALISM"

Norman Thomas speaks further:

"The new realism about war, the fact that no nation sings to-day of arms and the hero is good."

Where is this "new realism" in the capitalist world? Whom is Norman Thomas trying to mislead? If anything the capitalist nations thru their military organizations, boy and girl scouts, patriotic societies, schools, churches, newspapers, etc., military shows, parades, maneuvers, monuments, tombs of Unknown Soldiers are working overtime to glorify wars and raise upon the highest pedestals of national glory the military man, the so-called war hero.

Another Thomasonian gem. Writes Thomas: "Fear has more to do with modern war than hate. Nations fight for the Fatherland." What about imperialism, annexation of territory, mandates, spheres of influence, indemnities, special privileges? Modern imperialist war has nothing to do with fear, nothing to do with hate, nothing to do with fighting for the fatherland. They are wars between imperialists for the partition of the earth to enable them to invest their surpluses wrung from human toil. They are wars to get more booty, more plunder, more profits from the enslavement and exploitation of millions of toiling masses in other countries. In the last war the workers in the United States did not fight for their fatherland; they fought for the profits, property and investments of Wall Street. The capitalist fatherland is not the workers' fatherland.

Norman Thomas is against all working class revolutionary action for peace because it jeopardizes the imperialists and their "democracy," their right to plunder and exploit. He puts his faith in the hypocritical peace moves of capitalism rather than in the revolutionary action against capitalism and war. That is the essence of Norman Thomas's pacifism.

It is a program to deaden, confuse and make passive the workers against imperialism, against war. Thomasonian pacifism is not Socialism, is not working class in essence. It is petty bourgeois rubbish, old fashioned and out of place at a time when imperialist giants are just awaiting a favorable opportunity to plunge the world into a new war.

Problems of the Marine Workers

WHAT ABOUT THE MARINE UNION?

by "Lookout"

(Concluded from last issue)

The New Orleans Strike

A rank and file strike within the I.L.A. started a little over a month ago in New Orleans. Harvey, Hines and others went down there again to get in on the tail end to "direct" and "lead" the strike. However, the New Orleans longshoremen have not forgotten the blunders of last summer and will have nothing to do with the Industrial Union. One cannot expect the workers to follow one's leadership after calling them a bunch of "social-fascists" one day and good fellows the next.

The same occurs everywhere. The influence of the union is rapidly diminishing and in its place comes demoralization, disillusion and reaction. Every organizer that in the past was active, with a very few exceptions is today inactive. The union during its one year of existence has failed to develop a single organizer. Those comrades that have had past experience in organizing workers and leading strikes but who dared to ask questions at times and dared to question the correctness of the policy are being rapidly eliminated. Gildare, McGrath, Anderson, Morgan, Soderberg and many others are either expelled or more or less mysteriously eased out. All kinds of accusations and charges are being levelled against these comrades, openly and less openly. Only a shell of the union remains and even this shell is now finally cracking in places and ready to topple over.

What Is To Be Done?

We have tried in this article to point out the various blunders, the criminal errors committed by the party leadership and the union leadership. We have a few suggestions to offer to remedy this. We have learned many bitter lessons in this year of mistakes that has wrecked our union. We have learned how the wrong approach to the workers in the I.L.A. has lost us all our contacts there. We leadership has killed whatever chance there was for struggle. We have learned how the members have decreased from 4,000 to less than 300. We have seen how there is nothing but a shell left of the organization.

To what particularly can we ascribe these failures?

First, in the case of the longshoremen. Most of these workers are members of the I. L. A. Calling them "fascists" will not help. A strong left group must be organized within that union. A group that is sympathetic to our aims and ob-

ject. They must stay in that union and organize within it. Our slogan should not be the one Foster taught us: "If you cannot control the union, smash it". The I. L. A. is the strongest of all the waterfront unions today. The members of that union are by no means "fascists". They are workers like ourselves and our work should be to organize within that organization.

Secondly, the seamen. The I. S. U. still has about 6,000 members on the East coast alone. We can as little gain their confidence by calling them names as we can by calling the longshoremen names. It should be obvious that our place should be inside the I. S. U., following the line suggested in the I. L. A. previously.

Thirdly, the I. T. B. U., controlling as it does a large percentage of the barge captains, forms an important link in the chain on the waterfront. Once this union was offered on a platter to the Industrial Union but Papa Mink thought otherwise! You can bet the I. T. B. U. is glad today it was not accepted. This offer occurred before the leadership had yet had time to make the name of the union stink in the nostrils of all honest marine workers. Same methods must today be followed in that union as suggested previously.

The "Solidarity League". Well, sum-

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