

Mr. Thomas Fears Socialism

by Ben Gitlow

Norman Thomas may call himself a Socialist. But that does not make him a Socialist or a champion of Socialism. Nor does one who shouts pacifist phrases and coins good-sounding slogans against war guarantee peace. Woodrow Wilson was far more radical in his phrases than Norman Thomas. He called big business, capitalism and imperialism very ugly names in his *New Freedom*. Norman Thomas treats big business and capitalism politely, with soft, soothing words and apologetic phrases. How can we forget Professor Woodrow Wilson when he thundered against war, as the champion who "kept us out of war"—and then sent us into war?

This the late Woodrow Wilson did in the name of "democracy", as the champion of "peace."

The Program of Norman Thomas

Now along comes Norman Thomas with his appeal. The Socialist Thomas has nothing in common with Socialism. His program is not a Socialist program. It is a program for "democracy", says Norman Thomas. Let us examine his program. In his book, he writes:

"If the cost of harnessing the billion wild horses to our service is a dictatorship like Communism, with the glorification of the mass mind and soul, we need have no illusions that our children's children will not have a heavy price to pay before this old world is governed by a fellowship of free men."

The "billion wild horses" Norman Thomas refers to are the machines, the means of production and distribution. If the billion wild horses are to be harnessed for service and not for profit, thru "a dictatorship like Communism", then Norman Thomas is opposed to it. Norman Thomas considers Communism synonymous, identical with dictatorship—because Norman Thomas is anti-Socialist, anti-Communist.

The Role of the Working Class

The whole crux to the attainment of Socialism is the recognition of the revolutionary significance of the working class as a class in capitalist society. Socialists recognize that capitalism brings into being a large working class, necessary for capitalist production, and subjected to capitalist exploitation. As a result of this division between the workers and the capitalists, capitalist society is divided into two main classes—the working class and the capitalist class. The interests of these two classes clash. As a result of the clash between the workers and capitalists, we have raging in capitalist society a war of the classes, a class struggle. True Socialists, Communists recognize this class struggle, recognize its historical significance in that class struggle in capitalist society brings hold to the fore the fact that the only way in which industry can be harnessed for service to society and not for profit is by the working class destroying the power of the capitalists, expropriating the capitalists of their property, and, thru a working class government, taking over the wealth and industries of the country in the interests of producers, the workers and the farmers.

But Norman Thomas is emphatically opposed to a class appeal. He is for a "general appeal" to the goodness of all men and the "virtues" of democracy. He is in mortal fear lest the workers take over industry and run it to suit themselves. That would be a dictatorship. It would be too "costly", says Norman Thomas, because it involves the "glorification of the mass mind and soul."

Norman Thomas is opposed to the "glorification of the mass mind" of the working class in the attainment of Socialism. Norman Thomas, prefers the so-called freedom of the individual mind under capitalism to the glorification of the mass mind of the working class under Socialism or Communism. In other words, Norman Thomas prefers the present day capitalist mind. Let us take America. Surely Norman Thomas claims to be a native, one rooted in the American soil. Let us try to see what is so wonderful about the mind under American capitalism that Norman Thomas is afraid Socialism will destroy.

The "Free Mind" Under Capitalism

The New York Graphic is an excellent example of how the free mind is being developed under capitalism. The enticing, suggestive, pornographic poses of the nude and semi-nude chorus girls, the blood curdling gang and murder stories, those bedtime stories, filth, and, family smut that is presented for the glorification and edification of the mind. The editorials, the ads, the silly cartoons, the wise-cracks, the advice on beauty, the advice on how to capture a husband, and how to keep his love, the sports, etc., are all parts of the capitalist mind. The Graphic represents the freedom of the capitalists to pollute, poison, deaden and ossify the mind of the workers, to the end that their minds should be a sordid mess of those matters injected into them, making the workers unable to think except in the manner in which the capitalist want them to think. The capitalist are molding a mass mind of the workers that will prevent them from thinking effectively in their own interests. From infancy their minds are deliberately being molded, thru the schools, churches, newspaper magazines, movies, colleges and every available means of cultural enterprise.

Unblushingly Norman Thomas prefers this to Communism because the latter glorifies the mass mind of the masses for collective efforts under Socialism for the common good of the workers. Don't think together as workers! Don't have a mass mind! Don't act in unison—that is anathema! It is so much "cheaper" to continue capitalism with its rich and poor, its unemployment, its low wages, poverty, destitution starvation and misery. The capitalist system may be a competitive hell but it would be too

"costly" to have Socialism based upon the united thinking and agreement of the workers. Then if you will ask Norman Thomas: How about the glorification of capitalist mass control of the workers minds that leads them by the millions to slaughter on the battlefields of imperialist war? Is that costly, Mr. Norman Thomas? Perhaps he will answer: Oh, that's an emergency!

The "Fellowship of Free Men"

And the "fellowship of free men?" What does that mean, which Norman Thomas prefers to Communist dictatorship? Is that a fellowship of workers and capitalists? Is it a fellowship under capitalism with its class divisions and class conflicts?

Norman Thomas gives the answer in his book. His fellowship sees a continuation of capitalism and capitalist society. His appeal is to all classes, generally like the two parties of capitalism, to the people regardless of their class interests. The Socialist appeal to the working class is gone. The call: *Workers of the world, unite!* is gone from the message of Norman Thomas. Instead this is the clarion call:

"Its appeal will be many sided to men's interests as consumers as well

as producers, to their desire for justice and brotherhood even more than to mere resentment against class wrong."

But the capitalists are also consumers. Norman Thomas is for a program of democracy for the workers and for the capitalists. This is not Socialism, it is liberalism. The democracy of Woodrow Wilson was more bold. He stated in his book *New Freedom*:

"Politics in America is in a case which sadly requires attention. The system set up by our law and our usage doesn't work—or at least it can't be depended on; it is made to work only by a most unreasonable expenditure of labor and pains. The government, which was designed for the people, has got into the hands of bosses and their employers, the special interests. An invisible empire has been set up above the forms of democracy."

We know what Wilsonian democracy gave the workers. Imperialist war and the Palmer regime. It did not change capitalism or rout the capitalists from power. And the democracy of the "Socialist" Thomas, if given the opportunity, will yet shoot down workers to maintain American "democracy", American capitalism!

The Wrecking Course Proceeds

THE CRISIS IN THE "LAISVE"

From Statement of Lithuanian Opposition

(Concluded from last issue)

Bimba decided to seize *Laisve*, postpone the conference, suspend many shareholders and thus get a majority in the conference. In order to achieve this, he instructed his chairman of the board of directors, Weiss, to call (on February 4) a special meeting of the board of directors and here Bimba demanded that the board suspend three directors. Then three directors supporting Bimba would have been "drafted," making a majority for them and they would have arranged the conference to suit themselves. But they failed, seven votes against Bimba's proposition and four, for.

Bimba demanded that the directors give him (he now says—"to the Party") the addresses of *Laisve's* readers. The directors decided not to give these to him as they knew that they would be used to send out all of Bimba's scandalous attacks. Next morning we found the addresses stolen and several thousand envelopes gone.

The Conference

When the shareholders' conference opened, Weiss, as the chairman of the board of directors, began in every way possible to slander Butkus and his supporters. Upstairs! Nearly two-thirds of the shareholders demanded that Butkus be given the opportunity to answer Weiss' slanders. The Bimba fanatics yelled as loud as they could. Because of their yelling the majority of the conference became so angered that they did not let Amter speak when he, instead of speaking of activities of the C.P., began to repeat the slanders of Weiss. The uproar lasted the whole forenoon.

Then began the circus. The editors, instead of reporting on the paper, confessed their misdeeds and capitulated to Bimba and his clique.

The New "Directors"

It must be clear to every one, that such a conference was not legal and authorized, was contrary to the constitution of the *Laisve Cooperative*; it trampled upon all deencies and mocked the shareholders, who had built up *Laisve*. There are no directors now. Just a fig-leaf, covered with which, Bimba, can now cook another mess.

The new "board of directors" consists of the worst elements who in the past were either inactive or had dropped out of the movement. But so long as they are with Bimba now, they become 100% Communists overnight. (We will publish more about this later—Editor)

Since Bimba took control of the *Laisve*, his regime has driven the best workers out of the shop, and they have been replaced with anti-Communist elements.

Then the "election" of directors. A positive demand was made that the directors be nominated in the ordinary manner, and voted on by secret ballot as is always done in the *Laisve's* stockholders conference. Buivydas disregarded such demands, read the "state" proposed by the Bimbaites and demanded that we vote "for Communism" for this slate or—against the Communist Party! Again an uproar! For the Bimba slate, the Bimba committee "counted" 126 votes. (286 delegates officially registered at the conference). But still there was no majority. Against that Bimba slate 64 votes—the others rose in protest and left the hall. And this is how the conference broke up. These are the methods used in a non-Party workers organization!

Just Before the Conference

The Saturday before the conference there took place a caucus of the Party members. At that caucus those Party members who disagreed with the Central Buro were threatened that if they did not betray their convictions and openly denounce at the

conference the caucus of February 1st, they would be denounced as enemies of the working class and expelled. Bimba and Amter stated, that if they failed to get control of the conference, then the Party would smash *Laisve*, denounce it as a counter-revolutionary paper and the Buro would publish its own paper.

Thus pushed to the wall, certain weak comrades, especially the *Laisve* editors, agreed to surrender. But they surrendered, not because they had changed their opinions or were convinced that the Bimba Buro's threat was "Communist work," but because they feared the threat. We, of course, did not know of the dishonorable role forced upon them, and even if we had known, we would not have believed that "revolutionaries" would sell their conscience for a few crumbs from the Bimba table. Many of these comrades agree with us today, no matter what they say openly.

What's the Solution?

Comrades, shareholders and readers! From the above-stated facts you can see that dictator Bimba's Central Buro and its followers really want to destroy *Laisve*.

What is it to them if with their continual attacks, slanders and provocations they will drive out a large portion of the members of the Lithuanian Workers Literary Society and the Lithuanian Working Womens Alliance, Proletarian Art Society, Lithuanian Workers Alliance? What is it to them if the majority of *Laisve's* shareholders and readers become passive, leave our movement?

Are we going to permit them to do their detestable work? Every real revolutionary worker must immediately answer: No, and again, No!

What Must We Do Now?

Let us all carry out the following measures, if we want to save our organizations and institutions, and the whole movement from general demoralization.

1. Send urgent demands, even to the Bimbaite directors, that Anthony Bimba, head of the present disintegrating clique, be immediately removed from the editorship of *Laisve*.
 2. At the same time make a statement that we do not recognize the present directors as authorized and demand that a new *Laisve* cooperative shareholders conference be held and new directors elected—in the way that was always done up till this conference: open nominations and secret ballot.
 3. Copies of all demands should be sent to the address given below so that we would know how many readers and shareholders have performed their duties.
- Only the general protest of the shareholders and readers will force the Bimbaite to give up their destructive work. Only by breaking their destructive plans will *Laisve* regain the confidence of the masses and will be able to strengthen our movement in its entirety and to consolidate the forces of the revolutionary move-

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THE downward trend is deepening and is now general. Wholesale and retail trade, output of electric power, the stock market and bank clearings are continuing to decline. The very cheap credit set by the Federal Reserve is helping only the highest grade bonds. The Bank of England has dropped its discount rate to 2½%, the first time in nearly a quarter of a century. But these stimulants aren't helping one bit. Even the blue-