

Speech by Manuel Gomez

TO THE BRUSSELS ANTI-IMPERIALIST CONGRESS

Manuel Gomez represented the United States Section of the All-America Anti-Imperialist League at the Brussels Congress of Oppressed Colonial Peoples and Anti-Imperialists. His speech is an analysis of the present financial imperialism of Wall Street, and shows its roots in the exploitation of American and foreign workers.

PART II.

Exploitation of Americans

To the shame of the American working class it must be confessed that the American Federation of Labor has neglected to take a clear-cut stand in the face of the brutal aggression of the United States government in Nicaragua; Nowhere does the A. F. of L. come out definitely for immediate, complete and absolute independence of the Philippine Islands and Porto Rico. It supports the Monroe Doctrine in Latin America, just as it furthers the discrimination against Negroes and other oppressed groups in the United States itself.

It is necessary for us to take note of these things and to understand the sinister economic relationship which underlies them, if we are to proceed realistically in the struggle against American imperialism; and against imperialism in general. To that struggle, I take it, everyone present at this congress is irrevocably committed.

You may think I have painted a discouraging picture—a picture which shows American imperialism to be resting upon an unshakably secure base at home. But the truth is that, notwithstanding the claims of apologists for imperialism in labor's ranks the term "class collaboration" must still be put in quotation marks. Properly speaking there is no such thing as class collaboration under capitalism. Privileged sections of the workers may have temporarily deserted to the enemy but the class struggle still goes on.

Every day we are confronted with the spectacle of company unions breaking down before a critical situation and institutions which were created for one purpose being converted into their very opposites. Only at great expense can the flames of discontent be kept down. We are seeing in Great Britain what happens when imperialism can no longer afford to share its loot in sufficient quantities.

Moreover, and this is something which our comrades do not sufficiently realize, there are great bodies of workers in the United States—miners, steel workers, textile workers, the majority of the workers in machine industry, who are not in the privileged position of the American labor aristocracy. You hear that workers in certain sheltered trades receive as high as \$75 and \$80 a week but you do not know that the unskilled worker, even in the prosperous industries, does not earn more than \$20 or \$25 a week. In the textile mills of the South women receive from \$8 to \$15 a week, and the average wage for so-called male common labor is about 30 cents an hour, or \$16.20 for a week of 54 hours. The figures I cite are from the summary of the report of industrial conditions in the United States which is soon to be published by the International Labor Office of the League of Nations.

Millions of workers in the United States do not participate in the "American standard of living." On

the contrary they are exploited as unmercifully as workers in some colonial countries. The home structure of American imperialist capitalism is therefore torn across by a great contradiction. Not only have the workers referred to no interest in the imperialist ventures of Wall Street and Washington—fraught, incidentally, with the constant menace of wars—but they are themselves obliged to engage in desperate encounters with the ruling class. Examples are the various great struggles in the coal industry and the present long-drawn-out strike of the Passaic textile workers.

Even the masses of heavily exploited workers whom we have been considering are of course without real consciousness of their objectives. Most of them are unorganized, while the organized sections—notably the miners—are preyed upon by an officialdom which is rotten to the core. Nevertheless a militant left wing has sprung up and is spreading throughout the American Labor movement. The conscious left wing is still small but it is growing steadily and already it has a number of important successes to its credit.

We of the All-American Anti-Imperialist League, have received our chief support in the United States from the small left wing of the workers' political and trade union movement. It has been a reliable support because it is based upon interests which are identical with those of the colonial and semi-colonial peoples oppressed by American imperialism. It does not limit itself to side-issues. It does not hesitate before consideration of loyalty to American capitalism. The nationalist and national-revolutionary movements in Latin America and the Far-East can reckon upon it and depend upon it, for it will not fail them.

We in the United States have no such achievements to record as those described by our comrade of the powerful Minority Movement of Great Britain. The degree of development of the American working class has not made that possible. But I want to remind you that it is not so long since the British workers were even more imperialistic than the privileged sections of the American working class are today. The crisis of British capitalism has revolutionized formerly imperialistic workers and has made them realize that their interests are with the oppressed nations of the British Empire. Attacked from the outside and from the inside, the whole structure of British imperialism is crumbling. Today millions of British workers extend their hands to the revolutionary Chinese nationalist movement and tell the Imperial War Office at London to go to hell.

Such is the historical line of development. It will be the same in the United States too. Once the oppressed peoples realize that modern imperialism is but a stage—the final stage—of capitalism, they will know that although their surest, most trustworthy allies in the United States today are limited to the relatively small left wing of the American Labor movement, they will one day include the great body of the labor movement, and the American working class as a whole.

(To Be Continued.)