forces and currents in the present political situation

by jay lovestone
Recent Currents in the Labor Party Movement.

In this connection, let us proceed to look into the why and wherefore of the recent currents in the movement for the formation of an American Labor Party.

We find it necessary at the outset to declare that the movement for a Labor Party is not distinctly new in the sense of being purely a post-war phenomenon. Local isolated Labor Party movements have manifested themselves long before the World War, during periods of acute economic depression. Even prior to 1918 that the American Labor Party movement assumed national fundamental features, signs of developing on a national scale and toward a stable basis. From 1918 to the early part of 1924 the development of our Labor Party movement was, on the whole, in a forward direction. The general swing of the Labor Party movement in the last year or so, insofar as one can speak of general trends in so basic a movement as the development of Independent proletarian political action for so short a time, has been downward.

Let us, then, examine the economic and the political basis of the recent downward curve, of the slackening in the pace of development of the Labor Party movement in the United States.

The primary reason for the slackening of the Labor Party movement, is to be found in the intense development of American imperialism during the last two or three years. From the Treaties of Locarno, that is, from Dawes to Locarno, we go thru months of unbroken advance of the unorganized proletariat masses, which the world gold supply, the great export of capital, the strategy industrial and financial position of the capitalists, to mention but a few. In 1921 there were 2,385 strikes, in 1922, 1,606, and in 1924, only 1,227 strikes. In this connection, two facts must be remembered: first, strikes are conducted mainly by the organized workers. Secondly, the organized workers in America are today drawn from the ranks of the aristocracy of labor. Furthermore, in 1919, the number of workers involved in strikes was 4,160,445; in 1921, 2,095,247, and in 1924 only a total of 654,453.

Recent Currents of Class Collaboration.

If there is any proof wanted of the selling out of our trade federations by American bourgeoisie, to the bourgeoisie, let one examine the recent marked signs of class collaboration on the part of organized labor in its dealings with the capitalist class.

We will point out only three of the latest outstanding expressions of class collaboration. First, the American Chamber of Commerce, in cooperation with the municipal authorities of New York, has sponsored the idea of home ownership for workers. This movement, in cooperation with the American Federation of Labor, has been adopted by the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers.

b) The Home Ownership Illusion.

For many years the bourgeoisie have tried to undermine progressive movements of the proletariat by pushing the idea of home ownership among the workers. Now we come to the latest stage in the development of class collaboration. The home ownership movement has been a champion of the working class in the struggle for its rights. It now supports the idea of home ownership for workers.

2. The Watson-Parkard railroad labor bill, just passed by Congress, providing for the abolition of the Railway Labor Board.

We will now examine the facts and then the effect of this development of American imperialism on the movement for a Labor Party.

b) Labor Banking Schemes.

One of the leading labor banks of the country is the Federal Bank of New York. A committee of five directors consisting of "leading citizens" has just been organized to help this bank become a trust company. On this point we will call the attention of our committee, there are included nine representatives of the printing industry, eight publishers, eight bankers, seven builders, seven real estate dealers, six judges, six theatrical magnates, five industrial capitalists, five brokers and three insurance men. In this galaxy we find side by side with such labor leaders as Peter J. Grady, the president of the Bank, and Max Kuzner, of the Cloth, Hat and Capmakers' Union, A. T. Lefcourt and Michael Cashal of the International Union of Teamsters and Chauf- feurs, such conspicuous anti-shop spokesmen as Mortimer L. Schiff, international banker, asso- ciated with Kuhn, Loeb, and Company, Gerard Swope of the General Electric Company. The Republican Party is represented by Mr. Charles E. Hilles. The Democratic Party has as its spokesmen the Democratic capitalists. The Bank now has resources totalling $70,000,000.

There are very few labor banks in the American trade union movement who look with favor on the Fascist government. Even Mr. Green, the President of the American Federation of Labor, has recently been compelled by the opposition of the rank and file of the workers to denounce the Fascist government when the last Italian loan was floated in the United States.

The cases above mentioned are not isolated cases. They are rather straws indicating the current of the wind now blowing in the direction of American labor.
union of workers, it is not facing these workers as an individual railroad, but merely as an agent of a gigantic railroad monopoly. Consequently, the bill aims to pit some sections of the railway workers' organizations against the entire railroad monopoly.

Should the individual adjustment boards of the different railways be unable to settle a controversy, then the question at issue is referred to a permanent Board of Mediators, consisting of five commissioners appointed by the President: This Board will have the task of bringing about a friendly adjustment. Should this permanent Board fail, then it will refer the controversy to the Board of Arbitration, which would consist of five commissioners appointed by the President of the United States. The President would create a Fact-Finding Commission. This Commission is to make a report to the President within thirty days after it is constituted. During the thirty days, no investigation is to be made in the condition against which the workers protest. The bill specifically declares that nothing in the provisions of the bill shall be construed to prevent an individual railroad and its workers from coming to an agreement in disputed questions through voluntary arbitration that may have been established by mutual agreement. This legalizes company unions. The Railway Brotherhood chiefs thus sign their name to an endorsement, indirectly of course, of company unionism.

We must keep in mind that this bill is the product of negotiations between the railway companies and representatives of the skilled railway workers and leaves totally out of consideration the million and a half of waymen, railway shopmen and the other skilled crafts of workers employed on the railways. The bill has the approval of Gen. Atterbury, laborer in the scale Pennsylvania Railroad System.

Under these circumstances it is no wonder that the labor movement in the United States Congress landed this inclination of the railway capitalists and the leaders of the skilled railway employees into a trap. The bill, which has been denounced as "marked a new epoch in our industrial life." the contradictions of capitalism are far more powerful than all the notorious purposes of the betrayers of the railway workers in the United States. After carefully considering the bill, the Senate, the Railway Brotherhoods are determinedly seeking increased wages. There are multiplyings between groups of railway workers who will also demand wage increases during the present year. What is even more enlightening is that these demands for wage increases are not made in any conciliatory terms but are characterized by a demand for an effort to develop the workers to the point that the workers would be able to face the development of energetic resistance by the workers against their exploiters.

**Oppression of Great choirian Masses**

Concurrently with their practice of corrupting the skilled workers, the American imperialists have been tightening up, putting the screws on, and oppressing the great mass of unskilled workers. Those organizations of railroad labor consisting largely of the less skilled and unorganized groups of workers, the American imperialists have been trying to strangle them with an open shop drive of our imperialists. We need look at the dwindling numbers now in the ranks of the once powerful Railway Shopmen's organizations and the United Maintenance of Way men. What is left of the Seamen's Union? What is happening to the United Mine Workers of America? What are the chances of mobilizing hundreds of thousands of unskilled steel workers in the coming months for another unionization campaign as was done in 1919?

**Effect on the Labor Party Movement.**

What has been the effect of this imperialist corruption on the homogenous development of the American working class? The recently enacted railroad restrictive immigration legislation there came into the United States more than one million workers according to official records of the United States—in the year 1924 and 1925. In addition to this number of immigrants regularly admitted as legally entered, we must also add the hundreds of thousands who have in the last few years come into this country thru irregular channels, thru so-called illegal methods. According to the Commissioner of Immigration, Harry D. Hull, there are at present in the United States approximately 1,500,000 immigrants who entered the country irregularly and who are now liable to deportation under the provisions of the notorious anti-foreign born bills.

This giant influx of immigrants has certainly been proving a barrier to the tendency towards homogeneous development of the American working class and has further deepened the chasm between the native American workers which have been showing signs of a tendency towards a Labor Party movement temporarily to assume the leadership and the immigrant workers, especially those who have in the last few years come into this country thru irregular channels, thru so-called illegal methods. According to the Commissioner of Immigration, Harry D. Hull, there are at present in the United States approximately 1,500,000 immigrants who entered the country irregularly and who are now liable to deportation under the provisions of the notorious anti-foreign born bills.

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**The Petty Bourgeoisie Take Temporary Leadership.**

One further factor must be examined in analyzing the trend of the labor party movement in the United States. It is a fact that the contradictions within the American bourgeoisie gave rise to the broad labor movement countering, as it were, the revisionist, opportunistic, unorthodox, or even reformist current of this petty bourgeois movement rebelling against the aggression of monopolist capitalism.

Took over the leadership of the workers' movement towards a Labor Party. No one should overlook the fact that the leadership of the American labor movement is not a political experience compared to the leadership of the insurgent petty bourgeoisie movement.

Further, the Labor Party movement, to the extent that it did develop simultaneously with the progressive petty bourgeois movement, will weak and vague. Consequently, it can be seen as an easy task for the leaders of the La Follette movement temporarily to assume the leadership and to tighten their grip on these millions of workers more firmly than many of us have judged in the recent past.

**The Increase in Immigration.**

Another fact must be recounted in discussing the slackening of the tendency towards the developing of the American working class. During the war the immigration wave to America was practically ceased. The cessation of immigration was a powerful factor toward the development of the American working class. After the war, the restrictive immigration legislation there came into the United States more than one million workers according to official records of the United States in the year 1924 and 1925. In addition to this number of immigrants regularly admitted as legally entered, we must also add the hundreds of thousands who have in the last few years come into this country thru irregular channels, thru so-called illegal methods. According to the Commissioner of Immigration, Harry D. Hull, there are at present in the United States approximately 1,500,000 immigrants who entered the country irregularly and who are now liable to deportation under the provisions of the notorious anti-foreign born bills.

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One need not lose his patience and say: Well, it will take us as many years as it took the English working class to develop a big movement; the step has been so tremendous, the seriousness of the economic maladjustment of agriculture and the working class, we may say, is so great that a more scientific coordination of all industrial and business activities is needed.

The rate of farm failures from 1910 to 1924 shows an increase of over 1000 per cent in contrast to that of 1913-1918, and adoption of the farm tax reduction bill is a loss of approximately three billion dollars a year.

Once the farmers become really disgruntled the dissatisfaction is bound to spread into the rural areas, and the workers had a feeling that the settling up of the economic conditions in the rural areas must sooner, rather than later, bring disruptive influence upon the economic conditions in the industrial centers.

With the disappearance of the period of so-called economic prosperity, we have every good reason to believe, on the basis of our past experience, that the movement for political action by the workers as distinct from their exploiters. The basic forces responsible for the disintegration, the agencies making for contra-
tution there was a slight difference from this hack-
tions of the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor. Let us quote from the speech of Mr. Green on the Labor Party question, delivered at the last Federation of Labor convention.

"One may be a time when we in America can organize an independent political party, when our na-
ut is not a secondary one. It involves a fundamental change of interests between a sec-
..." the chief significance of this shifting of political power and influence is evident in many of the centers of world capitalist financial and industrial relationship. The forces of international capitalism are too numerous and too powerful to be disregarded. These forces were not present before, when the working class was visible in England and the European powers is a further sign of the new develop-

b) The Deepening Agricultural Crisis.

The mutterings of agricultural revolt are again being heard with increasing loudness. It is time to stop at this time to enter into an elaborate analysis of the conditions of American agriculture. Suffice it to say that the recent spurts of recovery were short-lived and not in the least fundamental. It was due largely to a temporary condition—the bumper crop and the wealth of demand in Europe. At the same time we see not only a revival,