"Innocent" Organizations In Struggle Against War

By BERTRAM D. WOLFE

(This is the fourth of a series of articles based on the report on "Problems in the Struggle Against War" delivered by Bertram D. Wolfe at the recent plenary session of the National Council of the I.C.L.L. Another article will appear in the next issue.— The Editor.)

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HAVING examined the general situation, we must turn to some practical questions in our struggle against war. First of all, there is our attitude towards such Stalinist "fringe" or "innocents" organizations as the American League for Peace and Democracy. In his report, Comrade Lovestone very clearly pointed out our whole approach towards "periphery" organizations has been wrong since the Comintern was born—that both we and the Communist Party and, to a lesser extent, the socialists, have too much been accustomed to have the parties set up "fringe" organizations instead of working thru the trade unions and other labor organizations, attempting to exploit the trade unions for their purposes instead of developing the trade unions themselves for the struggle of the working class on various fields.

But my point in connection with these organizations that have to do with war goes far beyond the general criticism that Lovestone has made in this respect. Why? Because between us and the Communist Party there are three yawning chasms: the gulf between class collaboration and class struggle, between support of capitalism and imperialism and struggle against capitalism, between support of colonial enslavement and struggle for colonial freedom. It is the gulf between the support of war and the struggle against war, between social-patriotism and social revolution.

We used to criticize the American League Against War and Fascism on two counts. First, a matter of principle, because, in its very title, it pretended all danger of war came from fascist powers. And second, on the practical ground that its organization was too narrow, too middle-class and gave a false sense of security as against the development of a real, effective movement against war.

But our old criticism is as outworn as the old name of the American League. The American League is no longer against war, but for war. That's why it calls itself for "peace." It is characteristic that "peace" should be the slogan under which chauvinism prepares war among the masses. It is no longer a league against fascism in Europe but a league that works for fascism, or the conditions that would bring about fascism, in America. It is today an agency of the master class in labor's ranks. We used to desire more unions in it. Today, we desire no unions in it. Our job is to expose and discredit it, to destroy it. It is actually a jump ahead in trying to do the service in the next war that the Walling-Russell-Spargo organization, which also called itself the "People's League for Peace and Democracy," did in the last war. Here we have the same thing under the same name, the only difference is that the Stalinites have learned from Walling, Russell and Spargo and have formed their organization even before war begins.

The American Students Union

The American Students Union is, of course, a somewhat different type of organization. Here, I think, we can still participate for a time for the purpose of attempting to crystallize and separate the conscious opposition to war. The students union is a broader organization, a less crystallized movement. It has other objectives but the Communist Party has already made giant strides in the betrayal of the student youth. They have just completed their sessions at Vassar. The Communist Party succeeded in forcing thru the abandonment of the Oxford Pledge. The Oxford Pledge has weaknesses but its heart is sound because it is a pledge not to fight in an imperialist war. Why has the Communist Party sought the abandonment of this pledge? Not because they felt that it was not effective. The Communist Party insisted on abandoning it because it wants to recruit the student youth for the next war.

The Daily Worker reports the convention with this headline: "See Student Union Support of F. D. R. Chicago Peace Stand." And Professor Frederick Schuman, at the convention, told the students: "The ultimate hope of peace lies in defending by arms, if necessary, the values of liberal civilization. The only hope of the world today lies in isolation of the fascist powers. There cannot be isolation without the use of force. That is the only thing they understand."

Perfectly clear language! This time we have to be grateful for the frankness of Professor Schuman.

"Down With Leninism!"

But the clearest expression of where the Communist Party stands on the youth and the coming war is given in this classic testimony, a dialogue between David Grant of the Young Communist League and Senator Burke and other senators of Massachusetts, during the investigation of "subversive activities" in that state:

SEN. BURKE: Do you believe in teaching boys they shouldn't be connected with the National Defense of the country?

GRANT: I have never said anything of the sort. I don't believe it.

BURKE: Do you believe in doing away with the National Guard, the C.M.T.C., the R.O.T.C., and turning any war into civil war according to the resolution of the 8th Congress of the Communist Party?

GRANT: No.

BURKE: Do you support the resolution of the 8th Congress of the Communist Party calling for the abolition of the R.O.T.C.?

GRANT: No.

BURKE: The resolution calling for the abolition of the National Guard and the C.M.T.C.?

GRANT: No.

BURKE: Do you believe in defending your country in case of war, would you fight?

GRANT: Yes!

GROVES: Do you know what the Oxford Pledge is?

GRANT: Yes!

GROVES: Do you know the young communists support the pledge which urges students to refuse to support the government in war?

GRANT: No, we don't.

GROVES: Do members of the Y.C.L. take the pledge in the American Student Union?

GRANT: No, they don't.

HOLMES: Do you differentiate, as did your leader Lenin, between "imperialist democracy" and "soviet democracy," as quoted by another member of the Commission?

GRANT: No, we don't differentiate.

So, on the attitude towards organizations which the Communist Party controls and turns into war recruiting machinery, there can no longer be any question as to what we must do.

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ample, who, on the one hand, boast that their payment of high wages has been a factor in leading the country back to prosperity and, on the other hand, argue that the present recession is the result of over-high wages wrung from them by C.I.O. pirates. I gather that what these people want is to put thru a series of wage-cuts and price-cuts, under the assumption that this will release a great volume of building expansion and industrial extension.

Wage-Cuts In 1929-1933

To any of you who harbor such notions, let me remind you that, from 1929 to 1933, there were almost constant wage-cuts and price-cuts going on; yet, instead of expanding, business continued to contract and decline. Diminishing the consuming power of the people, thru wage cuts, has never been a sound method of stimulating the sale of commodities.

However, if a greater volume of business is achieved at the same time that costs are cut, the combination of the two may produce an adequate payroll to further stimulate business of the nation. Certainly, if industrialists want to cut prices, it is not for labor unions to object; but we do object to cutting earning power to the point where it prevents the ability to pay union wages. Labor will spare no effort to defend and expand the position it has gained and the rights it has established.

Let me outline this experience from 1929 to 1933 somewhat further. The nation's trouble is that business is inactive—that the production of food, clothing and shelter is not what it was nor what it should be and, with the productive capacity this country has, it is not what it can be. This country is sick, ill-fed and ill-housed. Under these circumstances, the doctor prescribes a carefully rationed and much-reduced diet for all workers and their families. The doctor says that the working man has been living too luxuriously, that his food is too rich and that he should not be allowed to support himself and his family in the style to which he has become accustomed. And the doctor argues further that, if we reduce the standard of living of the most needy section of the community, the standard of living for all of us will be much improved. The idea that wage-cuts will cure a business collapse is as unsound and fatal as to attempt to cure anemia by bleeding the patient.

The Minimum Annual Wage

A number of labor unions, including our own organization, have gone on record favoring a minimum annual wage, based on a full year's continuous employment. For the automobile industry in particular, with its frequent and all too great fluctuations in employment, this would accomplish much

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