

Technocracy and the Workers

Technocracy is a fad. Like all fads it is a product of its times. Altho it was born in the boom period, it did not receive any serious attention until the economic crisis had lasted several years, when it suddenly caught hold and began to spread like wildfire. And precisely here lies the key to its success. Technocracy "reveals" the "secret" of the crisis. In the period of the boom, another kind of revelation was needed—the "secret" of prosperity and high wages. Just as, several years ago, delegations came from all the world to study this mystery, so today the secret of the crisis is being sought in the United States. The technocrats desire to save these searchers their trouble, just as their predecessors did in the days of prosperity. In the last analysis, the two explanations are the same. Prosperity was due to rationalization, mass production, class collaboration. The depression is due to the high development of technology! The very factors which yesterday were being palmed off as the creators of permanent prosperity are today discovered to be the source of all evil. And peculiarly, it is largely the same people who made both discoveries. This is no accident. Technocracy and the championship of rationalization, mass production, class collaboration represent two sides of the same coin. During prosperity, the head is on top; during a crisis, the tail shows itself. If the cure-all of rationalization, mass production, class collaboration, represented the jazz of prosperity, then the cure-all of technocracy represents the blues of the depression!

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The New And The Old

A great deal of "criticism" of technocracy has been based on the proposition that there is nothing new in it. If this were the sole cause for criticism it would be little enough. It is true that there is quite a good deal in technocracy which is old, but unquestionably it contains many new ideas. And the relation seems to be that the good ideas are the old ones, while the new ideas are the bad ones. In the system of technocracy as a whole, it is unfortunately what is new and bad, which gives it its determining character, making the entire system unacceptable in spite of some positive features.

Altho they have nothing but scorn for Marx and Marxism, the technocrats have not hesitated to "borrow" two outstanding ideas from it which they now endeavor to parade as brand new discoveries. One of the cardinal points of Marxism is the doctrine that the social relations in capitalist society have become incompatible with the forces of production, that, consequently, capitalism, which at one time served the historic function of developing the forces of production and advancing the progress of society, has now become a hindrance to the further expansion of the productive forces and stands in the way of the further progress of humanity. The destruction of the capitalist system and its replacement by a socialist order is the conclusion of Marxism, since social relations in a socialist system would be in harmony with productive forces, and would make their continued progress possible. The technocrats have now accepted the analysis of Marx, without, however, drawing his conclusions. Like the radicals, the technocrats have now discovered that if our means of production were operated rationally, everything could be produced in such great abundance and it would be possible to provide everybody with all life's needs and plenty over. They have even reached the figure that with a rationally operated system, every family could receive the equivalent of a \$20,000 a year income from eight hours work each week! Regardless of whether some of the figures of the technocrats are exaggerated or not (and there are many errors, contradictions, exaggerations and false conclusions in their figures), there can be no challenging the general direction in which these figures point. As such, they can only serve to strengthen the

The Newest "Substitute" for Communism

by Herbert Zam

Marxian doctrines. The adherence of engineers and scientists to such views lends them added authority. It becomes more difficult to dismiss them as "Red" agitation. Communists, Socialists, radicals generally, should not hesitate to use the support of these ideas by the technocrats for the purpose of making their propaganda more widespread and convincing.

Why, then, do the technocrats fail to draw the same conclusions as the Marxists from these two general propositions? Why do they present us with a mechanical and reactionary utopia as the solution to our problems? Technocracy, the brain-child of engineers, endeavors to fit society into the strait-jacket of engineering (physical) laws. Society operates not on the basis of physical laws, as the technocrats maintain, but on the basis of social-historical laws, as the Marxists have demonstrated. "The captains of industry are, as it were, defying the laws of physics" exclaims Stuart Chase, one of the spokesmen of technocracy. He gives the concrete example: "The Reconstruction Finance Corporation, in trying to keep railroad debts intact, is in the last analysis defying the laws of physics!" Stuart Chase declares the second of the three principles of the "industrial philosophy of technocracy" to be "the conception of energy mag-

nitudes as the conditions governing social and political institutions." This concept leaves out of the picture the really essential element—class (social) relations. Marxists do not and never have denied the influence of technological development on society. But they have studied, not the abstract, isolated, independent development of the purely physical means of production, but the interaction between this development and the society in which it takes place. Technological development has influenced class relations and social organization. Not to understand this is to understand nothing of society. The technocrats, who disdain to examine any laws except physical laws, the laws of engineering, forget the class struggle, abolish the working class and overlook the capitalist class—because that is the only way they can produce their utopia, technocracy.

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Between the technocrats and their mechanistic, sit-in-a-soft-chair and-push-a-button utopia, there stands the working class, real, alive, with its demands, its organizations, its struggles, its enemies and its friends. What to do with

it? Many a bourgeois and also "Socialist" economist, in trying to refute Marx, has smashed his head upon the Gibraltar-firm doctrine of the industrial worker as the bearer of social change in modern society, one of the cardinal points in the Marxian system. A feature of all petty bourgeois reformism is contempt and disdain for the working class in one form or another; a search for other forces to change society. The technocrats do not find it necessary even to discuss the working class as a force; they have solved this problem by the simple expedient of abolishing the workers! A class which does not exist can play no historic role. That is clear! And to technocracy, the working class does not exist any longer, except as an unnecessary survival, here and there, or as a historic memory. "Technology," writes a reporter in a newspaper, "has emancipated the worker in the same manner that the gasoline engine emancipated the mule—made him unnecessary." A glance at the writings of the leading exponents of technocracy reveals that this was no cub reporter's exaggeration, but a plain statement of technocracy's opinion. "In every industry technology has swept away the human worker," exclaims Howard Scott, the father of technocracy. Stuart Chase, another

technocrat, describes this process at length:

"The tendency in manufacturing and power production, and to a lesser degree in transportation, agriculture and clerical work, is in the direction of the full automatic process, where the machine does everything, the human muscle nothing. Such labor as is required increasingly takes the form of dial watching, control cabin work, switch inspection and set up. Even in this domain the photo-electric cell has been found to be a more dependable switch thrower than any human hand or eye."

So the steel worker, the automobile worker, the printer, the workers in the meat packing industry, only have the illusion that they are doing hard physical labor. Actually they are either not working at all or are, at worst, watching the dial. The fate of the working class is sealed. "The curve," says Chase, "heads remorselessly for zero." And with the curve, the technocrats have tried to head the living working class also for zero.

It requires no higher mathematics to destroy this foundation of technocracy. A glance at the census reports will show that there are in the United States eighteen to twenty million industrial wage earners, to say nothing of other wage earners (agricultural laborers, white collar workers, etc.), that the working class has been steadily increasing, absolutely in numbers and relatively in proportion to the size of the population. Even

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Against Sectarianism and Isolation

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE "NEW TURN"

A Statement

We publish below the political statement issued by the National Committee of the Communist Party (Opposition) on the recent "new turn" manoeuvres of the official C. P.—Editor.

* * *

The recent conference of unemployed organizations and other labor bodies in Chicago against the threatened cut in relief and the movement now under way in New York for a state-wide conference for government unemployment insurance, both initiated under the direction of the Communist Party, call striking attention to the definite "turn" that has taken place in the last few months in the official party tactics in regard to the united front and the organization of the unemployed. It is necessary for all Communists and advanced workers to understand this "turn" and to grasp its real significance in order to be able to estimate its implications for the future of the Communist struggle.

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The Main Elements Of The Turn

In the tactics of the official Communist Party in both of the above mentioned movements, there are the following main elements of a "turn" away from the ultra-leftist, sectarian system that has dominated the activity of the party for four years and still continues to dominate it:

1. In each case there was a united front of organizations of different political tendencies. In other words, they were real united fronts, even tho the New York preliminary conference was a very narrow one. The tactics applied in both cases are in the most crying contradiction to the notorious "united front from below," according to which a joint block of Communist and non-Communist, and especially reformist or conservative, organizations is the very height of opportunism, according to which a united front of the leaders of Communist organizations with the leaders of non-Communist organizations (as occurred in Chicago) is to be rejected as the worst deviation. For advocating the tactics that were partially applied by the official C.P. in Chicago and New York, the Communist Opposition has been viciously attacked and abused for years.

2. The fantastic theory that all

non-Communist (reformist or conservative) organizations, but especially the American Federation of Labor, are "fascist" or "social-fascist" bodies, was given the lie by the practice of both conferences, primarily of the New York gathering. Here A. F. of L. locals, constituent parts of an alleged "fascist" or "social-fascist" organization, were not only invited and admitted but even boasted about! In Chicago, an organization (Workers Committee on Unemployment) controlled by the Socialist party was invited and seated. Here too an important tactic, defended by the Communist Opposition, has been silently embodied in official party practice.

3. In the New York conference, no attempt was made by the party to pack the gathering with swollen delegations of party-controlled skeleton or paper organizations. In Chicago, however, the old bluff tactics held sway.

4. In New York, and partly in Chicago, the programs of action proposed were really minimum programs acceptable to all elements in the movement.

5. In the New York conference, the Communist Opposition as well as the Trotskyites were admitted to representation, their proposals heard and considered and some of our proposals were even accepted. At this conference, too, the accustomed atmosphere of abuse was ab-

sent. This was not the case, however, in Chicago.

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The Real Meaning Of The "New Turn"

Nevertheless, this "turn" represents no real or basic change in the tactics of the official Communist Party nor does it hold out any promise of the effective return of party tactics to the course of Leninism.

1. The "turn" is performed in an underhand and isolated manner, while at the same time the whole system of ultra-leftist tactics is maintained sacred and inviolable by the party and all deviations attacked and persecuted. The case of Comrade Verblin of Chicago, who tried to draw the logical consequences of the partial "turn" and was therefore abused as the bearer of "Verblinism," the new form of opportunism, is to the point. No significant change in tactics is possible without clearly recognizing the fundamental falseness of the general tactical course of the party and the necessity of revising it openly and thoroughly. Any partial "turns" conducted on the background of the old ultra-leftist system can lead only to a deepening of the confusion and ideological demoralization dominant today. What else can be the result of preaching the "united front from below" and yet forming joint blocks with the leaders of non-Communist organizations, of preaching the doctrine of "social-fascism" and yet entering into united fronts with the Socialist party organizations and the A. F. of L.?

2. The new "turn" is being performed on a system of the crudest double-bookkeeping. In the general work of the party, the old sectarian tactics are being pursued without the least change—this is notoriously true of some of the most important party campaigns, as, for example, the recent Hunger March. In one or two specially selected fields, experiments in new "turns" are carried on at the very same time. It is very obvious that the net result of this curious combination is to make even more difficult the absolutely necessary basic change in tactics.

3. Even where a "turn" is performed, it is done in an incomplete

and self-contradictory manner, which sometimes destroys even its limited effectiveness. In Chicago, for example, the Socialist unemployed organization was invited but deliberate attempts were made at the conference itself, by Wil-

liamson and others, to provoke its leaders to break away (see the article on "Why A United Jobless Movement?" by B. Herman, "Workers Age," February 1, 1933). In Chicago, too, attempts were made by the Communist Party-controlled Unemployed Councils to convert the united front demonstration arranged by the conference into a Communist election rally. At the New York conference, the resolutions committee was composed entirely of party members.

4. Even where a "turn" is performed, it is done in such an inadequate and limited manner as to render it almost meaningless. In Chicago, for example, a united front conference of unemployed organizations was held. But what does such a united front really mean, if it is not undertaken as a prelude to and in the light of a merging or fusion of all unemployed organizations (organizations all fighting for the same end and without difference of principle) into one non-partisan body? But this is still rejected as gross opportunism by the official party. (In this connection, see the article mentioned above).

5. While these "turns" are being performed, the Communist Opposition, from whose armory these new tactics were borrowed and under the stimulus of whose criticism they were initiated, is being attacked even more vigorously by the official party press—precisely for proposing, consistently, thoroughly and unhesitatingly, just those tactics that the official Communist party is applying, partially, uncertainly, and in a contradictory manner, in its new "turns."

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The only real and effective turn in party tactics must be a return to the tactical principles of Leninism, today defended only by the Communist Opposition. And this return to Leninist tactics can take place, not thru the piling up of dishonestly performed new turns, but by a conscious and deliberate and thoro scrapping of the whole of the sectarian course, root and branch, and an equally conscious, deliberate and thoro readoption of the tactical principles of Leninism, everywhere and in all fields. Any other way can only lead further into the abyss!

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TECHNOCRACY AND THE WORKERS

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large fluctuations in certain periods do not substantially affect either this general process or the relative importance of the working class in a bourgeois society. It is an incontrovertible fact that the development of machinery, the transformation of agricultural communities into industrial communities, increases the size of the working class, and not vice versa. In spite of machines, power, energy, we cannot forget that behind the machine stands the man, behind the electric current, or gas, or petroleum, there is the human laborer. Energy does not operate by divine benediction; it is created and operated only by the application of human labor. The human worker has not disappeared and will not disappear for a long time to come.

The efforts of the technocrats to demonstrate the non-existence of the working class are not mere philosophical or mathematical speculations. They are necessary for certain conclusions of a social and political nature which the technocrats draw. "What becomes of the class struggle theory?" asks Chase, interpreting his charts and diagrams. The answer is already obvious. "Where are the toiling masses without a worker in the plant? Photo-electric cells can readily identify the color red, but they are difficult to organize." No working class, no class struggle; no working class, nobody being exploited; no working class, no strikes; no working class, no struggle for

higher wages, shorter hours, unemployment insurance; no working class, no trade unions, no political parties; no working class, no revolution! A paradise—for whom? For the workers who no longer exist? No! For the one who has reason to fear and hate the working class, without being able to do without it—the exploiters! Let technocracy convince the worker of his own non-existence and non-importance and some of the main problems of the capitalist class are solved. We see here the basic anti-working class orientation of technocracy, a system which rejects the class struggle, which rejects all efforts on the part of the on the part of the workers in their own behalf, which rejects the working class as an instrument for the revolutionary change of society. It is then no wonder that technocracy has no use for any working class organizations, such as trade unions or political parties or for working class ideas (Marxism is described as an "intellectual expression of dementia praecox" and Communism is dismissed as a thing of the past) and is definitely hostile to that country where the working class is already reconstructing society on non-capitalist lines, the Soviet Union. This anti-labor system is the legitimate child of a section of the petty bourgeoisie, engineers, technicians. scientists, largely declassed by the crisis, but so intoxicated with a sense of their own importance that they are incapable of concocting any

scheme of social change unless it revolves entirely around themselves. They offer themselves as a substitute for the proletariat. "As the proletariat declines in numbers and importance, the technical class grows." Stuart Chase is speaking. "History may now be in the process of creating a new industrial class, more important than the worker, owner, creditor or financial manager—the men who understand and operate energy. Technocracy is the first formal organization of this class." These tin-type economists and tin-can engineers have at least something in superabundance, shallow belief in their future, inflated pride in their powers!

(Continued in the next issue)

WHAT'S HAPPENING TO AMERICA?

(Continued from page 5)

tists", and with them the great bulk of the bourgeois sociologists and economists, are only latter-day representatives of what Marx called "conservative or bourgeois Socialism." "There are certain bourgeois," Marx describes them, "who want to redress social grievances—in order to safeguard bourgeois society . . . They want the conditions of life which characterize modern society without the antagonisms and the dangers which are the inevitable outcome of these conditions." And, as if in deliberate commentary upon these words of Marx, the committee throws out its parting warning:

"Unless there can be a more impressive integration of social skills and