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Table of Contents

Labor Upsurge

JUNE 1933 — DECEMBER 1934

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The Meaning of the Upsurge

IN the eighteen months between midsummer, 1933, and the end of 1934 the organized labor movement reversed a ten year decline in membership and morale and spurted forward with a vigor unequalled since the Eight Hour agitation of forty years ago made the American Federation of Labor a force in American society.

What was the cause of this new vitality? Is it due to Section 7A or to other factors less apparent? Can the gains be held? Do the growth of industrial unions foreshadow a basic change in the structure and philosophy of the A. F. of L.? What lessons have been learned from the recent strikes? Has the present upsurge run its course or only entered a lull before a new strike wave? Is the New Deal moving toward outlawry of strikes and government supervision of unions? Will the unions turn to socialism as a way out of the continuing depression?

These questions are puzzling almost every thoughtful unionist and socialist. The answers are not clear, but perhaps a bird's eye view of the labor struggles of recent months will bring a better understanding of the needed labor strategy for the future. That is the purpose of this article.

The present upsurge has no near parallel in American labor history. It differs from the period of great labor activity in the nineties in two major aspects: the unions then being formed were challenging a youthful capitalism which had not yet developed in its financial organization to the stage of monopolies, nor in its technology to the stage of mass production; and in consequence the craft union of skilled workers,

rather than the union of all workers in the industry, evolved as labor's most effective fighting unit. The unskilled and the semi-skilled were not yet a stable basis for trade unionism. Capitalism was rapidly expanding and they drifted easily from one industry to another, while almost any worker could still aspire to be a boss.

The present upsurge has also been compared to the period of 1917 to 1922. The comparison is misleading. During the war years it is true that union membership spurted even more rapidly than at present, but for a different reason. Then there was a labor shortage, war profits were immense and labor could be forgiven almost anything if only it didn't stop production. Following the war came an extensive strike wave. It was labor's resistance to the wage cuts in the post-war collapse. Moreover, the employers who had accepted unionism while the war profits rolled in were now taking the offensive in seeking to return to the "normalcy" of the open shop.

Labor's struggles of 1933-34 are not just another revolt following in the wake of a depression. They have a deeper significance, and need to be judged in the light of two new factors in American history. They are:

(1) American capitalism has apparently entered a period of permanent decline. This is not just another depression. The usual safety valves of capitalist crisis (new markets abroad and new markets at home which arise from the creation of new consumer goods like the automobile and radio) are not open today. Surplus men, surplus machines, and surplus goods have become a permanent feature of American capitalism. If this theory can be shown to be true, as I believe it can, then it has a profound bearing on the future trend of the present revolt. No substantial improvement in working conditions will be possible in a shrinking economy, and the demands of labor will be extended from wage, hour, and recognition issues to the demand for the social ownership of the means of production so that work and goods may be distributed according to need. The trend of many workers to the socialist way out of the crisis is already well under way.

(2) Labor has been gaining a foothold, on an industrial union basis, in the basic industries heretofore unorganized. When labor becomes strong at the core of economic power it is then in a position to fight effectively for a new economic system.

Labor's Strength Today

While the total trade union membership has increased since July, 1933, the major gains have been confined to a few unions. Some of the older craft unions have continued to lose members. The total paid-up membership of the American Federation of Labor for August, 1934, was 2,824,689, an increase of 697,893 in twelve months. Adding to this number the unemployed who cannot pay their union dues the Federation estimates that it represents a total of 5,650,000 workers. The membership of unions not affiliated to the A. F. of L. probably does not exceed 350,000. The strength of organized labor may therefore be estimated at 6,000,000 members, or about 20% of the wage and salary workers of the country who might be considered union prospects.

The most encouraging gains of the past eighteen months are recorded in basic industries such as automobiles, rubber, textiles, and lumber, where heretofore labor has been almost wholly unorganized. There are now nearly 70,000 organized rubber workers in an industry employing about 85,000. The United Textile Workers report a gain from 15,000 to 300,000, though it is too early to tell how permanent is this increase. The auto industry is far from organized but unions have nevertheless gained a substantial foothold. In the aluminum industry eighteen months ago there was only one local union (New Kensington, Pennsylvania,—built largely on the initiative of socialists). Today there are 20 locals, representing 15,000 workers in every plant in the country. These federal union locals are soon to have their own national organization.

Generally speaking, the unions that made important gains were unions that engaged in well planned and aggressive organizing campaigns and relied upon the strike rather than

government mediation boards to win their demands. Outstanding among these were the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union, which under its socialist president, David Dubinsky, jumped in one year from the twenty-fifth to the third largest union in the Federation, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, the Hosiery Workers, and the Oil Field, Gas and Refinery Workers. They are industrial unions.

Unions that lost members included the Railway Carmen, the Cigarmakers, the Photo-Engravers, the Letter Carriers, the Carpenters, the Commercial Telegraphers, the Marble Cutters, the Sheet Metal Workers, the Plasterers, the Printing Pressmen, the Post Office Clerks, the Seamen, the United Garment Workers (overalls, etc.) and the Hod Carriers and Common Laborers. In all cases the decline was a continuation of a trend evident for five years or more, and all but the last two of these unions are strictly craft in their composition.

In the most basic of all industries—steel—the organization campaign has flopped badly despite undoubted union sentiment. It is true that a steel strike without adequate preparation would be not only a disaster to the steel workers' union but a serious blow to the whole labor movement, but, nevertheless, had the union had a more aggressive leadership it could have achieved at least the first condition of a successful strike, namely, the confidence of the workers.

Union organization has made some headway, though it still has far to go, among the electrical manufacturing and radio, cereal, cement, public utility, cleaning and dyeing, gasoline station, canning, and office workers. Some 40 locals of agricultural workers have joined the A. F. of L. though there has been no general organizing campaign.

Against the increase in union membership stands an ominous increase in the membership of company unions, which has been five times greater. This growth may be traced directly to the N.R.A. The estimated membership of the company unions today is about 10,000,000.

Genuine unions unaffiliated with the American Federation of Labor have, with few exceptions, made little progress.

Two independent unions, the Mechanics' Educational Society, and the Industrial Union of Marine and Shipyard Workers, have arisen within recent months and have had several notable successes, while several other independents have gained in some localities. But the future of independent unionism does not appear promising. The dual unions affiliated with the communist Trade Union Unity League have, with the exception of the Fur Workers, virtually no strength and are in many instances now being dissolved.

The Effect of the N.I.R.A.

Attempts to build unions, establish collective bargaining, raise wages from the depths to which they had fallen, and shorten hours to spread employment, were due to occur whether or not there had ever been a National Industrial Recovery Act. The strike wave was already under way before the Act had been considered by Congress. In February, 1933, auto strikes broke out at the Briggs plant in Detroit. In May the International Ladies' Garment Workers gained a sweeping victory in the Philadelphia market which, for fifteen years had been unorganized. The Amalgamated Clothing Workers had already begun their notable campaign to organize the shirt workers.

The N.I.R.A. nevertheless did give an impetus to union organization. As the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party pointed out at the time, and as is now fully apparent in the perspective of a year and a half, the impetus was chiefly psychological. Labor had always had in America the legal right to organize, and experience under the N.I.R.A. has shown that it has gained only what it had the fighting power to take. Where labor was weak it was ignored in the making of the N.R.A. codes. Employers heeded the collective bargaining provisions of Section 7A only to the extent of setting up company unions. The power of government—police, troops, and courts—as usual was used to break strikes.

But the publicity given to Section 7A led millions of workers to believe that they had been given a new right.

Their long pent-up discontent soon burst forth, and in every city of the nation, union offices were thronged with workers seeking help.

The attitude of the National Recovery Administration, and the various agencies set up to handle labor disputes arising under the Act, was indecisive and conflicting from the very start. It is not clear to this day. The wording of the labor section of the Act (7A) itself is vague. It prescribes "collective bargaining" but does not say whether this shall be by means of labor unions or company unions. General Johnson and Richberg have thrown their influence more or less openly toward company unionism. The National Labor Board, and more especially its successor, the National Labor Relations Board, by upholding the principle that all workers in a plant shall be governed in their bargaining by the majority, have advanced the interests of genuine unionism. Sometimes, this policy has reacted against the A. F. of L., as in the case of Kohler plumbing workers, where after months of delay and the exclusion of many strikers from voting in the Board's election, the company union gained a majority.

This confusion in policy could scarcely be more harmful if it were deliberate (as it may well be). Labor does not know whether to oppose or accept Section 7A. Presumably the decision of the National Labor Relations Board for majority rule in the Houde case is a precedent for all future cases, unless the decision is upset in the courts. But at the moment of writing, representatives of the steel industry and of the steel workers are discussing union recognition with the President, and, unrestrained by the President, the steel industry insists upon the right to bargain on the basis of "proportional representation"—that is, one agreement with its own company unions, and another with the A. F. of L. Apparently the President sides with Richberg rather than with his Labor Board. A forthright stand by the Administration in favor of company unionism would be better than this straddling and the run-around of evasion, indecision, and conflicting policies. For, then, labor would know where it stands and could fight

accordingly.

Disillusionment with the N.R.A. grows apace in labor ranks. Whereas, a year ago the N.R.A. was enthusiastically hailed by the leaders of the A. F. of L. the report of the Executive Council to this year's convention declares: "It is in regard to Section 7A that the most cruel disillusion of the workers regarding the N.R.A. has occured. . . . Workers who joined unions in good faith found themselves dismissed for no other reason than that they had accepted at face value the promises contained in the law; company unions were created by employers to prevent the growth of real unions and to forestall real collective bargaining. Agencies set up by the N.R.A. . . . were either unwilling or unable to enforce the law, or delayed so long in its enforcement that unions concerned were weakened and even destroyed."

No open moves have yet been made by the Administration to outlaw strikes or to incorporate unions, but prominent New Deal spokesmen, notably Secretary of Commerce Roper, have broadly hinted that some such action may be taken if the strike wave continues. The demand for this fascist policy is growing among business leaders.

The Strike Wave

Most of the strikes of the past year and a half have been a result of disillusionment with the N.R.A. Beginning often as spontaneous walkouts in single plants they have grown in scope and intensity, reaching the bitter class warfare of the Philadelphia and New York taxi, the Toledo auto, the Minneapolis truck, and the San Francisco general strikes, and culminating in the walkout of a half million textile workers on a 1500 mile strike front from Maine to Alabama. This crescendo of revolt was a perfect barometer of the workers' disgust with the "National Run Around" and their determination to take matters into their own hands.

The story of these strikes deserves a book. In this article only thumb-nail sketches of a few are possible:

Reading hosiery strike: The fortress of the open shop in

this industry yields in July, 1933, to the mass picketing of 10,000 workers under the militant leadership of the American Federation of Hosiery Workers. The first Labor Board elections are held in these mills.

Pennsylvania shirt makers: Mass picketing, flying squadrons, and enlistment of other unions (especially the miners), bring unionism to 25,000 shirt workers in country town sweatshops.

Bituminous coal miners: Repeated strikes in "captive" mines controlled by U. S. Steel finally compel owners to sign contract with officials of the union, though technically not with the union itself. Strikers for first time disregard requests and demands of N.R.A.

Weirton and Budd: Workers take Section 7A seriously, join steel and auto unions, are discharged, forced to strike, receive conflicting promises from the N.R.A., starve while government action is delayed, and finally go down in defeat. Widespread disillusion with the New Deal develops.

Philadelphia taxi drivers: Militant struggle replaces faith in the N.R.A. as union strategy. Socialist strike leaders tell National Labor Board to "come with clean hands" in Weirton and Budd cases before it offers to mediate. First sympathetic strikes under N.I.R.A. occur when eight Teamster Unions join with taxi drivers in three day general transport strike. After seven weeks taxi men win substantial, though not complete, victory, January, 1934.

Camden shipyard workers: Independent industrial union also relies upon aggressive striking, goes over heads of Labor Board, sends delegation direct to President. Wins big victory through 100% solidarity in its ranks.

Toledo Electric Auto-Lite: Mass defiance of injunction restores strike morale. Gunfire by National Guard arouses working class of entire city, and pitched battles between troops and strikers rage intermittently for three days. General strike is threatened, union wins.

Milwaukee public utilities: The organized unemployed under socialist leadership join with three A. F. of L. unions

to tie up street cars and power plants. Their militant demonstrations, in which 60,000 are estimated to have participated, bring complete victory. A socialist mayor, Daniel Hoan, deports strike breakers from city.

Minneapolis truck drivers: Again aggressive striking. Strikers publish their own daily paper. Farmers cooperate in setting up markets for food distribution when commission houses are closed by strike. Workers drive vigilantes from the streets in street fighting. Farmer-Labor Governor declares martial law, headquarters of both employers and Central Labor Union are raided by troops. After almost causing workers to lose the strike, the Governor aids by permitting only those truck owners to operate who have accepted Department of Labor's settlement plan, approved by strikers.

San Francisco general strike: Police murder of two pickets in longshoremen's strike, and futility of N.R.A. mediation, stir workers to a three day general strike. It spreads to Oakland, Berkeley and other nearby cities. General Johnson flies to Frisco, invites vigilantes, in violent speech in which he refers to strikers as "rats", to raid communist and other radical headquarters. Newspapers, "liberal" as well as reactionary, spread vicious lies about the strike. Strike is broken, but all unions continue to gain strength. Labor has new confidence after its great show of solidarity.

Textile workers: Code violations, starvation wages, and governmental run-around compel United Textile Workers' convention to order general strike. Under leadership of Francis J. Gorman a half million workers are brought out in fifteen states. Despite inadequate preparation, virtually no funds, and "greenness" of most strikers, effective generalship makes this one of the best organized strikes in history. Nine New Deal governors call out troops to break strike. Fourteen strikers are killed, many more crippled for life. Governor of Georgia establishes concentration camp for strikers. Hitlerization of textile area goes unrebuked by Roosevelt. Roosevelt appeals over the head of the union for strikers to return to work on basis of report of the Winant fact-finding commission, and

union is forced to accept the settlement. What the strikers have gained, aside from a strengthened union, is still doubtful. New strikes are threatened by Gorman.

Thus, in a mounting wave of discontent, accompanied by increasing repression by local and state governments and equally effective, but more subtle, strike breaking by the Federal government, the strike wave reaches its climax in the general textile strike. For the present it has entered a lull, but its force is not spent. New strikes, especially in the automobile industry, loom in the spring. In the steel and automobile industries strikes were prevented last summer by direct intervention of the President, who appointed special mediation boards. Late in December, 1934, the automobile unions, angered by the dilly-dallying and the double dealing of the Automobile Labor Board, announced their withdrawal from the Presidential agreement of the previous May. Eventually, this means a strike. When it occurs new labor history will be made.

The death toll of strikers in the first nine month of 1934 was 46.

Wages, Hours and Jobs

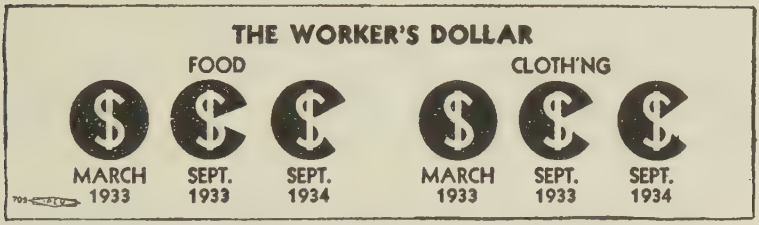
The announced aims of the National Industrial Recovery Act were to increase purchasing power and employment. In both objectives it has failed.

In a few industries, where wages were as low as $3 and $4 a week, notably textile, furniture, and certain branches of the garment trade, wages have been raised by the N.R.A. codes. In many other industries the wages have been lowered by the codes. The report of the A. F. of L. Executive Council to the last convention declares:

"Average weekly earnings have decreased in automobile, iron and steel, paper and pulp, and wool textiles. When the increase in the cost of living is considered, the real situation . . . is seen to be even worse than the figures indicate. . . . Millions of workers have less purchasing power today than they had a year ago. . . . All kinds of subterfuges have been used

to reduce all wages to the minimum. . . . The establishment of lower wage rates for Negro workers than for white workers has been general. . . . The sex differential has been written into a majority of codes."

The accompanying chart shows strikingly the shrunken buying power of the worker's dollar since the New Deal went into effect:



Compared to what a dollar would buy in March, 1933, it was worth only 78 cents in the purchase of food and only 79½ cents in the purchase of clothing in September, 1934.

Employment has increased since March, 1933, but is now shrinking again. The A. F. of L. estimated 10,951,000 jobless in September, but Robert J. Watt, secretary of the Massachusetts Federation of Labor presented evidence at the A. F. of L. convention which indicates that the correct figure is 16,000,000.

Attempts to reduce working hours under the N.R.A. have met with little success. Only one industry has less than a 30 hour week in its code—the cast iron soil pipe industry. The 35 or 36 hour week has been established in the garment, rubber-tire, and a few miscellaneous industries. Otherwise the code provisions permit 42, 44, 48, 52 and even 54 hours per week. Add to this the fact that the codes are widely disregarded, and the supposed reduction in hours of work in order to spread jobs is seen to mean practically nothing.

The A. F. of L. has determined upon a campaign for the universal 30 hour work week. The Roosevelt administration is adamantly opposed. Short of a socialist government in Washington the only prospect of achieving the 30 hour week seems to be a nationwide strike.

Where Do We Go From Here?

Point by point, the evidence is overwhelming that the New Deal has failed to bring labor any substantial improvement in its security or conditions of work. The New Deal on the other hand, has fostered company unionism, strengthened monopolies by relaxing the anti-trust laws, and embarked upon a program of planned scarcity through restriction of farm and factory production at a time when eighty per cent of the population, according to the estimates of the Department of Labor, lacks enough clothing, food, and housing. In my opinion, when the results are separated from Washington's stream of words, labor's losses under the New Deal outweigh its gains.

After eighteen months it should be evident that labor can win very little from any government whose purpose is to preserve the profit system. Its major conquests will be won by its organized economic power. These battles could be better fought if the A. F. of L. would establish a centralized relief and legal defense fund, mobilize every striker for some active duty during the struggle, publish its own newspapers, and extend its educational work.

This argument for greater reliance upon the economic weapon, however, is not an argument against political action, but only against political action through capitalist parties. Labor needs its own party (including the farmers and sympathetic middle class elements) and through that party needs to fight for the complete control of local, state and federal governments. Once the power of government is in our hands we will need to proceed promptly and firmly to establish the social ownership and operation of all industry, and to expand production to meet the needs of every individual.

Unquestionably the needs of every individual could be amply filled. The National Survey of Potential Product Capacity has within the past month shown that there are the resources in the United States to provide every family with an income of $4,370 a year. The increased efficiency of a socialist

society could probably soon increase this income to $5,000 a year.

This, then, is the real goal for labor—a labor government making possible plenty for all, rather than a junior partnership in the scarcity economy of the New Deal.

PAUL PORTER was the organizer of the Philadelphia taxi drivers, the historic importance of whose strike he tells in this issue. He is now National Labor Secretary of the Socialist Party and the author of the Commonwealth Plan.

ARTICLES TO COME

The Conquest of Democracy	Devere Allen
The Negro's Stake in Socialism	Margaret Lamont
Arming for the Next War	Edwin C. Johnson
Socialists and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat (translated by Al Meyer)	Theodore Dan
Fascism	Sidney Hertzberg
Socialists in the Trade Unions	Jack Altman

The United Front

HAIM KANTOROVITCH

1.

THE Executive Committee of the Socialist and Labor International devoted the greater part of its last session to a discussion of the united front problem. The decision arrived at was that no united front between communists and socialists on an international basis was as yet possible. The parties constituting the International may, however, in accordance with their local conditions, decide for themselves whether or not they should enter into united fronts with the communists.

The decision is being criticised bitterly from the right as well as from the left. This, the critics say, shows more than anything else the impotence of the Socialist International It is afraid of making decisions; it is afraid of giving leadership to its constituent parties; it is afraid of being an International of action. All it aspires to be is an international discussion society. Whenever it is faced with a real issue, it leaves the making of decisions to the constituent parties themselves. If, however, every party is always and on all problems to act at its own risk, independently of other parties, having only its own national interests in mind, heedless of the international situation, why then an International? Of what use is this International which is afraid to act and afraid to lead?

There is considerable truth in this criticism. Sooner or later the socialist movement will have to face the problem of reorganizing and revitalizing the International. But, when this criticism is applied to its decision on the united front problem, it is unjustified. The Socialist International in discussing the united front problem really discussed the unity of the International. Any positive decision for or against the united front

may have resulted in a split in the International. A number of parties belonging to the International concluded united front agreements with the communists long before this discussion took place. They entered these united fronts because the situations in their respective countries made it both necessary and profitable for them. They could not break up these united fronts without seriously harming themselves. Besides, they are for the united front on principle, and could not submit to the right wing majority without violating their own principles. On the other hand, there are a number of parties within the International that would not, on considerations of principle, as well as of practicability, enter into a united front with the communists. This is especially the case with the large and influential parties like the British Labor Party, the Swedish Socialist Party and others. Not only are these parties violently opposed to communist theory and practice (in this opposition many left socialist parties would agree with them), but, what is of more importance, the communist parties in those countries are merely insignificant sects, with no following and no influence in the labor movement. A united front between a large, influential mass party and a small, insignificant sect, may of course be of great value to the sect, but it is positively harmful to the mass party.

A decision of the Socialist International that would be binding on all parties might have led to a split. Who would have benefited by a split in the Socialist International? Certainly not those who are for unity. Unity is not attained by new splits. It is true that the communists would have greeted a split in the Socialist International with joy. After all, they have more than once frankly stated that they are for a united front because this may, and they hope it will, break up the unity of the socialist movement. There is no doubt that if the communists would have to choose between a new split in the socialist ranks and a united front, they would choose the former. That would help them greatly in their noble work of wrecking the socialist movement. We doubt, however, whether a socialist anywhere would help them in this noble work.

2.

It is now up to the socialist parties belonging to the Socialist International to decide for themselves whether or not they are for a united front. According to the decision of the N. E. C. of the American Socialist Party, the 1936 national convention will have to make a definite decision on the united front problem. Until that time, those who are for, as well as those who are against, the united front will naturally try to convert the party to their view. The united front problem has been agitating the party for a long time now, and will probably be among the major problems at the next pre-convention discussions as well as at the convention itself.

In all discussions on the united front the Socialist Party is at a disadvantage. The Communist Party spends enormous sums of money, and most of its energy, on its united front propaganda. Dozens of pamphlets, leaflets, appeals, and special letters are distributed particularly among socialist party members. It is true that the tone of the communist literature has changed lately. We do not hear so often from communists now that every non-communist is a traitor, a lackey of the bourgeoisie, a fighter for capitalism and fascism or just a plain faker. Even the profound truth that Norman Thomas is "just now" busy preparing a war against Soviet Russia is not used as often as it used to be. The tenor of the newest literature is falsification of the history of the socialist as well as of the communist movement. The aim of this literature is, above all, to place the guilt for the original split in the socialist and labor movement on the socialists. The tone of the literature is usually one of insinuating innocence. It is an appeal to socialists: You socialists have split the movement. All right, "we" will forgive you that, but how long are you going to keep the movement split? In order "to prove" these falsifications the literature is filled with misquotations, perversions of truths, and downright lies.

Members of the Socialist Party naturally are interested in the united front problem. They want to know something

about the history of their own as well as other proletarian movements. But there is no socialist literature for them. If a socialist wants to read anything on the history of the movement, on the split, on the rise of communism, on the rise of fascism, on the collapse of the Second International, on the rise and decline of the German republic, on the situation in Soviet Russia, he must either read communist literature or liberal-bourgeois books which usually repeat all of the "communist truths" about socialists. There still are "practical" people in our party who advise us to "bother less about foreign countries and more about America." They do not, even now, realize that a correct understanding of our own problems is impossible without a knowledge, and a detailed and critical knowledge at that, of the experiences of the socialist movement in other countries. As a matter of fact, the rank and file of the Socialist Party do not heed the advice of those "practical leaders" just as they do not take the advice of the leaders not to bother with problems of the future (Road to Power, etc.) But, as there is no socialist literature they get all their information from communist sources. That they don't succumb to communist influence is of course evidence of the great amount of common sense that they possess. Besides the communist way of "telling the truth" is now so well known, that even communists themselves take it with a grain of salt.

In the matter of the united front the absence of socialist literature (even Gus Tylor's pamphlet on the United Front is out of print) is very unfortunate. Due to this lack of correct knowledge members of the Socialist Party sometimes discuss the united front, unwillingly of course, from the communist point of view, and naturally arrive at false conclusions. In the discussion on the united front the question "Who is responsible for the split?" is unavoidable. It is of course easy for one who is informed to show that the socialist and labor movement was deliberately split by the Communist International; that the split was not an accident, but a consciously planned policy on the part of the communists; that the communists honestly believed, and still believe, that splitting socialist parties and

"reformist" unions is a great revolutionary achievement because it helps destroy the socialist movement which is for them the chief obstacle to the revolution. All that would be necessary would be to reprint the official theses, resolutions and declarations of the Communist International, of the R. I. L. U. and of the Communist Party on this question. One could show that splitting was proclaimed by Lenin himself as one of the main "tactical lines" of communism, and that it has never been given up. As early as May, 1914, Lenin, in speaking of socialists who did not share his views, proclaimed,

"With such people the split is necessary and unavoidable,"

and again,

"Unity with these social-chauvinists is a betrayal of the revolution, a betrayal of the proletariat, a betrayal of socialism, desertion to the side of the bourgeoisie, etc."

At the opening of the second congress of the Communist International the president at that time of the C. I. declared,

"Our fight against the Second International is not a fight between two factions of the same revolutionary proletarian movement. It is not a fight between different streams within the same class, it is practically a class struggle." *

It will, however, be a mistake on the part of the reader to think that that bitter fight is directed against "the right wing" of the socialists, against "the social-chauvinists". For Lenin, as well as for Stalin, the left wing of the socialist movement is even worse than the right. Stalin made this very clear when he stated at the sixth congress of the C. I.:

"It was stated that the fight against social democracy is one of the fundamental tasks of the sections of the Comintern. That of course is true but it is not enough. In order that the fight against the S. D. may be carried on successfully, attention must be sharply directed to the question of fighting the so-called left wing of the S. D."**

When the Communist International at its third congress at last decided to initiate the new tactic of the united front, it

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* Lenin—*Problems of the Third International.*

** Stalin—*Leninism* (English), Vol. II, p. 192.

made no secret about the motives behind this tactic. In books, pamphlets and newspaper articles the "faithful" were instructed that the united front was a new method of destroying the socialist movement. The old method of direct splits had failed. Moreover, in his report to the Fourth Congress of the Communist International Zinoviev had complained that the workers looked upon the communists as the "disintegrators" of the movement.

> "Perhaps," Zinoviev (then president of the C. I. and leader of the world revolution) confessed, "they had some reason for doing so. At one time, in our efforts to defend the interests of the workers as a whole, we had to split the old social democratic parties. We should have betrayed the working class had we failed to take this course. It was essential to secure a rallying point for a genuine liberating movement of the working class, and this could only be done by the creation of a communist party. At this period we had to accept the role of secessionists, for only by splitting the old Social Democratic parties could we forge the instrument for the liberation of the working class." *

Some naive communists, however, misunderstood the united front. They simply interpreted it as an effort really to unite the working class. They were chastised and disciplined, and some were even expelled. The united front is not an endeavor to unite the working class but to split it by "unmasking" the "traitors". At the fifth congress of the C. I. Karl Radek "unmasked" the united front by ridiculing it.

> "We know," Radek said, "that the social democrats can and will fight. But we propose to them that they should fight with us in order to unmask them . . . but we rather spoil the effect of the unmasking when we announce beforehand, our object is not a common struggle. What we are out for is to unmask you." *

Radek was accused of a right deviation (one of his periodical right-left deviations from which he always suffers). In reply

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* *Fourth Congress of the C. I.*, abridged report (English), p. 35.
* *Fifth Congress of the C. I.*, abridged English report, p. 54.

to Radek, Zinoviev, with the approval of the vast majority of the Congress, declared:

> "Let the international proletariat, the S. D. and all our enemies know what our strategical manoeuvers are. The word 'manoeuver' is often interpreted to have a bad meaning, but to a certain extent we can say that all our tactics are manoeuvers. . . . He who thinks that we propose a political amalgamation with the so-called 'labor parties' is mistaken. Let all parties know that the opinion expressed here by several comrades, headed by comrade Radek (i.e. to take the united front seriously as an effort to unite the working class. H. K.), is not the opinion of the Communist International." *

But why bring this "ancient history" in to the discussion? Are we going to punish the communists for their past by opposing a united front at the present time? No, we are not. The history of the splitting activities of the communists is not, per se, an argument against the united front. Before, however, the Socialist Party enters into a united front with the communists, it must be sure that the communists have at last really changed their view on the united front. If the united front is still nothing else but a manoeuver on the part of the communists to destroy the Socialist Party more effectively, it is clear that it would be nothing short of suicide to oblige the communists.

Have the communists really changed their attitude on the united front? If they have, they have kept it secret. They still maintain and preach the theory of social fascism according to which the direct aim of the socialist movement is to help capitalism out of its difficulties. The Communist International still teaches its adherents that the real enemy of the working class, the enemy against which the chief blows must be directed, is not fascism but socialism.** Is it possible that the communists really want a united front with those whose aim

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* *Ibid*, p. 129.

** See the author's "Toward Socialist Reorientation" for direct quotations to this effect.

it is to help capitalism, to betray the working class, to help engineer a war against Soviet Russia, to break strikes with the help of hired gangsters?* In short with the enemies of the working class? It is hard to believe so! If, however, the communists really have changed their attitude, why don't they simply and openly declare it themselves. They know well that until they openly repudiate the social fascist theory, no real united front will be possible because no one will believe that they honestly mean it.

3.

It is said: The united front is not purely a communist issue. It is necessary for the working class. Only a united labor front may fight successfully against the dangers of war and fascism. To this we wholeheartedly agree. There is nothing so important for the labor movement as a united proletarian front. But would an alliance of the socialist and communist parties help or hinder such a united labor front? At present it would hinder rather than help. First of all the communists frankly declare that they do not want a united front of proletarian parties. Earl Browder makes it clear in his article on the united front in the "Communist" for October, 1934, where he says:

> "But by no means do we accept the idea which is being carefully cultivated by enemies of united action that the united front means to bring together the S. P. and C. P. with the small groups of renegade leaders like the Trotskyites, the Lovestonites, the Musteites, the Gitlowites, etc., etc. We consider that such a united front has absolutely nothing in common with the needs of the masses."

In other words, the united front is not to be a united front at all. It is to be an alliance of two parties, the S. P. and the C. P. The rest are excluded because the communists are

* In a pamphlet written by Israel Amter, and widely distributed, some of the chapters are headed, "Why dot the socialists betray the workers", "Why do the socialists employ gangsters to break strikes", etc. Amter does not ask whether the socialists do these things. He merely "explains" why they do so. This pamphlet was distributed as communist campaign literature.

"mad" at them. But these are not the only parties and groups that are to be excluded from the united front. In the above quoted article Browder says:

> "On the other hand this formulation may mean, and to many people it does mean, the ending of the struggle by the communists against the policy of William Green, Matthew Woll, John L. Lewis, MacMahon and company—the official leadership of the A. F. of L. . . . and we declare that if this is what they mean by united front or conditions for the united front, this condition the communists will never accept. . . ."*

This is supposed to be an answer to the declaration of the N. E. C. of the S. P. that "no united action on specific issues is possible between socialists and communists except on a basis which also gives hope of ending fratricidal strife within the trade union movement." Earl Browder knows well that the socialists would not dream of demanding or advising the communists to give up their legitimate opposition in the trade unions, or to stop fighting within the trade unions against everything that is bad, obsolete and contrary to the interests of the working class. But this is not what the communists have been doing. Instead of being an opposition within the trade union movement they are its sworn enemy. Not the reform of the trade unions, but their destruction, is the openly declared aim of the communist movement. Dual unions certainly cannot reform the trade unions, and experience has shown that they cannot destroy them either. The communists have learned this from their own bitter experience. All of their dual unions were lamentable, often ridiculous, failures. They brought nothing but harm to the working class and succeeded only in absolutely isolating the communist movement from the living and fighting labor movement. The communists are now "changing their tactic again". They are dissolving their dual unions and are sending their followers back to the A. F. of L. But it is not because they have decided to

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* *The Communist*, October, 1934, p. 956.

give up their dual union policy. It is because the dual unions have failed and are disintegrating. Jack Stachel makes it very plain in his article in the "Communist" for November that this change of tactics is not a change of policy; it is only a temporary expedient. A writer in the "Workers Age" (Lovestonite organ) asks very rightly of the communists, "What will you do in the reformist trade unions? If you will insist that the A. F. of L. is 'fascist' and 'a section of the employers', then your purpose can be only one,—to destroy the unions. If this be your line then the change in policy is one of merely transferring the destructive virus of dual unionism into the very heart of the trade union movement." * This is exactly what socialists object to. Moreover, this is exactly the most important obstacle in the way of a real united front. As long as the communists will keep to their present trade union policy, the trade unions are practically excluded from the united front, and a united front without organized labor is worthless. It may even become harmful, because such united fronts without organized labor very often become a united front against organized labor.

Are the socialists ready for a united front? The communists love to shout this question from the house tops. There is one answer for socialists. Yes, we are ready. It depends entirely on you. As soon as you liquidate the theory of social fascism, agree to a united front inclusive of all proletarian parties and groups, and give up your harmful and suicidal (for you) trade union tactics, there will be a real united front. The socialists are ready and waiting. It is up to you to make the united front possible. Will you?

Of course, socialist party locals have participated, and will participate, in united front actions with communists as well as with other proletarian groups for specific local actions. But this cannot take the place of a real united front on a national scope. Such a real united front will come as soon as the communists will really be ready for it.

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* *The Communist Party and the Trade Unions* by George F. Miles, "Workers' Age", December 15, 1934.

The N. R. A. in American Economic Development

HARRY W. LAIDLER

DURING the eighties of the last century, the United States witnessed its first trust and combine movement with the emergence of the Standard Oil Trust, the Whiskey Trust and other combines of those days. This movement gave rise to the Sherman Anti-Trust Law of 1890, and, during the last forty odd years, an attempt has been made by various governments with more or less enthusiasm and more or less success—chiefly with less success—to enforce this and supplementary laws. In the meanwhile the old system of rugged individualism has been crumbling. Merger movement after merger movement has concentrated industry into fewer and fewer units, and, by 1932, Drs. Berle and Means maintained that fifty-five per cent of the assets of the industrial corporations of the United States were held by 200 great corporations out of several hundred of thousands of corporate units. In field after field a majority of the business was done by one, two, three and four great overlords of industry. In the production of iron, aluminum, nickel, cash registers, sewing machines, biscuits, chewing gum, farm machinery, etc., and in the supplying of telephone and telegraph service or lack of service, as the case may be, one corporation in each field of effort, does the major part of the business. In the automobile, electrical machinery, locomotive, cigarette and other industries, two vast corporations collect over half of the revenue, while in many other lines a somewhat similar concentration has taken place. Through monopoly control of the market and through gentlemen's agreements and trade associations, etc., many an industry has engaged in price fixing for years past, and has definitely put an end to the old regime of unrestricted competition.

And yet, under the law, price agreements and other arrangements that interfered with the free flow of commerce were supposedly illegal, and had to be conducted surreptitiously by eminent members of the industrial, financial and legal fraternities. Big business chafed under these restraints and for decades past had urged the extension of the power of the trade associations and other groups over the fixing of prices, the restriction of output and other business practices. Business men looked abroad, and saw German and other industrialists organizing under cartels and encouraged to do many things prohibited in America. During the world war, industrial cooperation, particularly in the field of export, was urged by the government, and, following the war, the movement for the suspension or the abolition of the Sherman Anti-Trust law became an increasingly powerful one. This movement was accelerated by the fact that our productive capacity was increasing to a far greater extent than mass consumption. During 1922-9, the real wages of workers increased 1.4 per cent a year. Profits of industrial corporations increased about 7.3 per cent a year, while we were putting aside in new productive equipment an increase of 6.4 per cent a year. Chambers of Commerce, manufacturers' associations and other groups time and again urged a relaxation of the rules against monopoly and trade agreements, and maintained that, in exchange for concessions along these lines, business would be willing to make concessions to labor.

With the coming of the depression, the increasing failure of capitalistic industry to function, and the growing demand for some type of social planning, business saw its opportunity. Gerard Swope presented an elaborate plan for the organization of corporations in trade associations with wide powers over production and prices, maintaining that this constituted just the kind of economic planning that the American people were looking for as a means of leading them out of the economic wilderness. Mr. Hoover was extremely timid about sanctioning such a plan, but, when President Roosevelt was elected, big business renewed its effort for what it afterwards called

"self-government in industry", as a means of ending the depression.

The National Industrial Recovery Act, which the Chamber of Commerce boasts of as its child, was one of the results of this extended movement for the elimination of anti-trust legislation.

In its suspension of the Sherman Anti-Trust laws, in its forcing of industry to organize under codes, with all sorts of powers over unfair practices, large scale industry accomplished in one fell swoop under the guise of progressive legislation, the thing for which it was striving with little hope of success since the nineties. In this respect the enactment of the N.R.A. accelerated the movement for increased concentration of control by industrial management over the field of consumption, labor and investment.

In return for this concession to organized capital, business was willing to have inserted in the codes certain provisions demanded by workers.

The United States has been among the most backward of the industrialized countries in the organization of labor. In 1920, following the war, about 12 per cent, about one-eighth of the organizable workers, were organized. By 1930, this percentage had decreased to eight per cent. The strategic industries were, for the most part, without any effective labor organizations. Such firms as Ford's dealt only with individual workers, as if one unit of labor, a single individual, could bargain on anything like an equality with a billion dollar corporation. Many corporations had organized company unions that were owned body and soul by the employers. Whenever the workers started to organize a union of their own, the corporate managements used every effort at their command, including the spy system, company guards, the blacklist, injunction, police and constabulary, to break up the union. The trade union movement was on the downward path. It looked upon the N.R.A. as an opportunity to get official recognition of the principle of collective bargaining, a principle for decades unquestioned in many countries abroad, and was

willing to give great concessions to capital to secure such governmental recognition. Two sentences were inserted in the law, Section 7-A, which read:

"Employees shall have the right to organize and to bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing. No employee and no one seeking employment shall be required as a condition of employment to join any organization or to refrain from joining a labor organization of his own choosing." This provision was thus inserted as an attempt on the part of labor to break up the feudalistic relationships that existed in American industry between the worker and the big corporation.

The United States had in other ways been far behind many other countries in labor legislation. The Federal Child Labor Law had been declared unconstitutional. Hundreds of thousands of children were employed under tragic conditions in American industry. Some saw in the N.R.A. a chance to decrease this evil, at least temporarily, in this country.

Wages were tragically low in many industries, particularly during the depression. Many were getting six, seven and eight dollars a week for long hours of toil. The N.R.A. was regarded as offering a chance to raise minimum wages without federal legislation that might be regarded as unconstitutional, and, at one and the same time, providing a decent living to many families and increasing the purchasing power of the masses. Before the adoption of the N.R.A., there had been an increasing demand for a 30 hour week. Large numbers of industrialists in the country jumped on the N.R.A. bandwagon because they were in fear of the passage of a 30 hour law and other acts which the government would seek to enforce, and preferred hour and other regulations imposed by themselves on their industry to more drastic legislation enforced by the government. In fact many business men realized that the economic depression was leading to an increasing demand for government regulation or public ownership as a way of remedying some of the flagrant evils of capitalism. They felt that, by supporting the N.R.A. they might divert that movement to

a movement for the policing of industry by itself. There were others undoubtedly who believed that the Constitution would not permit minimum wage and similar types of legislation, and the N.R.A. might help to get immediate action.

What has the N.R.A. accomplished? It has accomplished at least one good thing: It has taught tens of thousands of workers that any deal that has as its object the retention of the system of private ownership provides no way out for the masses to economic security, social justice or human liberty.

We have lived under the N.R.A. for about a year and a half and we have found it wanting. Many looked to the N.R.A. as a means to economic security. During its operation, many have been absorbed in private and public industry, but still a vast army of over ten to fifteen million men and women—an army of unemployed nearly twice as great as during the peak of the 1921 depression—are still vainly hunting for jobs. In the city of New York, the richest city in the world, nearly 400,000 families are in desperate straits and dependent for their very existence on private or public charity. In September, 1934, over 800,000 more were without jobs in private industry than in September, 1933.

Industry has long since shown itself incapable of providing jobs to the workers. Even in the booming days of 1920-1929, there was a minimum army of unemployed of anywhere from 1,500,000 to 4,200,000. During days of so-called prosperity, there is no guarantee of work, while in hard times the situation is a ghastly one. As capitalism develops; as industry after industry falls into the hands of private monopoly and prices are maintained at a high level; as the growth of population comes more and more to a standstill; as the unsettled areas in the country shrink; as competition for foreign markets becomes ever keener, as mass production makes it possible after a depression to saturate the market again with ever greater speed, insecurity and unemployment under capitalism tend to increase and a permanent army of the unemployed to grow to alarming proportions.

The N.R.A. undertook to reduce hours of labor. Hours

have been reduced by about 4 hours a week to about an average of 40 hours, although, in many cases, such reduction has merely meant a sharing of work at low pay. This is not enough. A reduction of hours by one-tenth is not sufficient to give jobs to the workers. A forty hour week with the present wage scale and with business activity at the level of 1923-5 will mean the continuance of unemployment on a vast scale. Dr. Frederic C. Mills of the National Bureau of Economic Research brings out the fact that 57 men in the manufacturing industries could, in 1932, produce as much as could 100 men 13 years before in 1919. Or, putting it in another way, the average worker in a factory in 1932 could produce in about 4½ hours a day or in a 25 hour week as much as his predecessor in 1919 turned out in an 8 hour day or in a 44 hour week. This increased productivity does not apply, to be sure, to all industry, but it is true of the fundamental process of manufacture, while in every line of industry machinery and efficiency methods have led to increased product per unit of labor.

The N.R.A. prescribed certain minimum wage scales. They were far too low. In many cases, especially among the Negroes of the South, they are violated by the wholesale. The codes make no provisions for an automatic increase of minimum wages with the increase in the cost of living. In many cases the minimum have tended to become maximum wages; in large numbers of instances, they have led to a speeding up of labor and to one person doing the work of two.

Recently I was speaking to a manager of a chain store. "How is the N.R.A. affecting you?" I asked. "Well," he replied, "the codes forbid the ordinary worker in our stores to work for more than 40 hours a week. They say, however, nothing about executives. Executives can work an unlimited number of hours. So they proceed to raise an employee who is getting around $35 a week to a little above $35 and put him in the ranks of executive. I am one of these, and now I do the work of manager, assistant manager and porter. I get on the job at 7 o'clock in the morning—sometimes earlier—and work

until closing up time. We have had to give a minimum wage to our employees working for a full week. As a result we employ them less hours, so that the actual wage bill is less than it was before the N.R.A."

The great increase of industrial home work with wages of $2 a week up, as a means of evading the code provisions, is one of the tragic incidents of the N.R.A. Minimum wages must be given that provide a decent and self-respecting standard of living to all.

The New Deal promised the abolition of child labor. In many industries fortunately children are no longer employed, at least to the extent they were a few years ago. But still in industrialized agriculture, in the personal service, newspaper and other industries, hundreds of thousands are working for a miserable pittance. The Child Labor Amendment is needed as desperately as ever.

The N.R.A. promised a new era of collective bargaining. In the decade from 1920 to 1930, as we have said, labor organization decreased in power. This decrease was due partly to the increased power of the great combine and monopoly in business and politics and its ruthless opposition to organized labor; partly to the sweeping away of old craft lines through the installation of new machines; partly to the failure of the trade union movement to adjust its tactics and its structure to changing industrial techniques and partly to the fact that the workers were bamboozeled into the belief that the new capitalism could be depended upon to bring to them high wages, short hours and industrial security—not forgetting a few Wall Street melons—without any necessity on their part for trade union or political organization.

The depression came, followed by the New Deal and Section 7A. The unions in many industries put on a vigorous campaign. The campaign has netted the numerous needle trades and other unions many members. On the other hand, it has given a status to company-controlled unions which they never before possessed; and has meant the bitterest sort of battle between the forces of labor and the combined forces of

capital on many an industrial battle front. Unless additional legislation is passed putting teeth into Section 7A, it will fall far short of its mark. The N.R.A., through its $238,000,000 appropriation for naval purposes under the P.W.A. administration, has been instrumental in driving forward the military machine.

The codes have organized industry almost 100 per cent. Many of these codes have fixed minimum prices. Those prices in numerous instances were pegged at a level that would ensure a reasonable profit to the most inefficient firms and an unreasonably high profit to the most efficient firms.

The added administrative control over price-and-production policy under the codes, according to Gardiner C. Means, in a paper delivered in May, 1934, "has been used in all too many industries to raise prices to the point where they yield a profit which could only be jusified on a very much larger volume of business. In case after case the price charged to the consumer has gone up not only more than the increased purchasing power paid out in its production, but to a point which yields a profit on a volume of production representing a scarcity condition. Thus, prices have been increasing faster than the individual worker's wages in a fashion to reduce the volume of product which can be sold. One of the reasons why this depression is greater than former depressions is that of recent years, under our monopolized and quasi-monopolized system of industry in many lines, our price level has become more rigid. The N.R.A. has tended to increase this rigidity, and to decrease purchasing power. Here again the emphasis is on profit-making by restricted production instead of profit-making by optimum volume."

Profits under the N.R.A. have gone up. In 1933 some 1487 manufacturing and trading corporations obtained declared profits of 661 million dollars compared with an aggregate loss in the previous year of 97 million.* The gap between productive and consumption power remained as wide as ever.

* *National City Bank Bulletin,* April, 1934.

In many instances the codes, dominated by big corporations, have given great power to these companies over the entire industry and, as has been pointed out, has accelerated the movement toward concentration. The Darrow report called attention to many cases of increasing dictatorship in industrial control. "Indeed the codes permitted in numerous cases for whole industries so great a concentration of control over production, price and investment policies that the legitimacy of continued reference to competition is doubtful." *

The debt structure of the country has been increasing in past years. This has meant an increasing burden on the people. For every $100 of annual income, we gave $6 for long term debt service in 1913, $9 in 1929, and $20 in 1933. The N.R.A. is in no sense an example of social economic planning, planning under which industry is coordinated and run as a single unit to the end that all available resources may be utilized for the maximum satisfaction of the needs of the people.**

Social planning involves genuine self-government in industry. No self-government is possible without adequate representation in the directing machinery of the consumer and the worker. The codes under the New Deal were initiated and administered by industry, with consumer and employee in a strictly advisory capacity.

A genuinely planned economy calls for the socialization of industry. The chief aim of Mr. Roosevelt's planned order is the assurance of continuous profits to the owners of industry. At most the New Deal brings us nearer to state capitalism. Only in the case of the Tennessee Valley Authority and Housing are there any significant steps toward public ownership.

Social planning aims at the fullest possible use of the industrial equiment for the benefit of the masses. The New Deal under the National Recovery Act leads to the use of only such equipment as seems necessary to yield the profits to the owners.

Social planning aims at a secure and comfortable existence

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* Professor Arthur R. Burns in *Political Science Quarterly*, June, 1934, p. 170.

** See Lewis L. Lorwin on "The Meaning of Planned Economy", World Planning Supplement, *Week End Review*, p. 4.

for the nation's workers and living standards in accordance with the increased productivity of industry. The measures proposed by the New Deal fail to guarantee security, fail to abolish the great extremes of poverty and wealth based on private ownership of the nation's resources; fail to develop a fundamental system of taxation or to establish a balance between the power of the nation to produce and its power to consume.

Social economic planning presupposes the operation of all industry as a unified and coordinated whole, not merely the integration of activity in one industry. Planning in a single industry, as under the New Deal, may mean greater instability in another industry. Any plan in the steel industry for the limitation of production vitally affects the building industry, the automobile industry, the mining and other industries. No stability is possible unless planning is conducted on a national scale.*

Finally, genuine planning on the part of society involves the ownership by society of the industry directed. An individual finds it difficult indeed to plan the day's work of an automobile or machine owned by some other individual. It is an easy matter to plan the tasks of property owned by himself. A community can prevent the owners of automobiles or of money or of factories from engaging in certain anti-social activities, but it is difficult for that community, unless it assumes dictatorial power, to direct affirmatively the use of things it does not own. The Rooseveltian New Deal left intact private ownership of basic industries, and, by that token, made social planning impossible.

Under capitalism, the problem of production is not, "What quantity of goods should be produced to satisfy the wants of the people?" The question is, "What quantity of goods will lead to the highest profits?"

Society might be far better off if the larger quantity were

* See Address by Dr. Harlow S. Person in *World Social Economic Planning*, pp. 162-3; article by Pierce Williams on "American Proposals for Planning", in Laidler, *Socialist Planning and a Socialist Program*, p. 15 seq.

produced and distributed at a cheaper price, but the maker of goods for profit would not make so much money. Goods are thus not produced to their capacity, although there is crying need for them, or, if produced, they are often destroyed. "In their days the Greeks burned currants; the Dutch gave premiums for the collection of the buds and young leaves of the wild clove, in order to curtail the finished product. Eighteenth century English fishermen threw their catch back into the sea and London butchers their meat into the Thames. . . . In our own day of high-powered organization, monopolies and expanded commercial enterprise, more is . . . wasted than ever before." * The wholesale destruction of coffee in Brazil and the drastic curtailment of cotton, wheat and other crops, while people face starvation and go half naked, are indicative of the working of our present day economy.

The difficulty under capitalism is that the interest of the individual owner is at variance at many points with that of society. Since society does not own the factories, shops, farms, banks and investment resources of the country, any attempt at planning compels the use of the coercive powers of the state to prevent thousands of individual owners from doing things calculated to bring maximum profits to them, though scant returns to society as a whole. The result is constant friction, waste and social conflict.**

Under capitalism every step toward planning for the common good is achieved against the opposition of a thousand different interests in industry anxious for private gain. Under a socialized system, the owner and planner are one and planning becomes the normal order of the day.

In Italy, with its "corporate state", where employers and workers are required to join trade associations and trade unions in their respective industries; where a council has been set up to supervise the industries of the state; there is the same kind of overproduction and lack of balance between production and the effective demand of the masses as elsewhere, and none of

* Dr. Neurath in *Survey Graphic*, March, 1932, p. 622.
** See Laidler, *Unemployment and its Remedies*, p. 96.

the problems of poverty or insecurity have been solved.

In Germany, where the organization of cartels within industries and between allied industries was permitted by law, the problem of genuine economic stability is as far from solution as ever. Here the state capitalistic structure built up by the industrialists led not to socialism or communism, but to a fascist state.

Capitalist "planning" has little in common with scientific national and international planning for the common good.

The N.R.A. has thus helped in the process of integrating industry, of carrying us still further away from the old individualistic moorings and concentrating control in the few. It has established certain minimum standards, though providing no adequate enforcement machinery for such standards It has tended to strengthen certain militarist trends, has done nothing fundamental to meet the problem of security nor can it be regarded in any genuine sense of that term as an experiment in social planning. It is hoped that, as this becomes increasingly apparent, we will decide to do the only thing that will meet the ever more pressing social problem— socialize our industries and proceed to planning on a scientific and common sense and social scale.

The Bankruptcy of American Communism

DAVID P. BERENBERG

THE Communist movement in America split from the Socialist movement in 1919 on the assumption that an immediate world revolution was impending; that this revolution would proceed on the lines of the Russian model; that in America, too, the workers were on the point of seizing power. History refuted this dream, and the Communist parties everywhere settled down to the spade-work of building a proletarian movement for future revolution. They have been engaged in this task for fifteen years. What have they to show for it?

One of their spokesmen, O. Piatnitzky, in a speech entitled "The Communist Parties in the Fight for the Masses" states (p. 15) that in 1921 the Communist Party of France had 110,000 members, while in 1932 there were 32,000. In the 1928 elections (p. 16) the Communist vote was 1,063,993 while in 1932 it fell to 795,630. In 1923 the Unitary (Communist) Trade Unions included (p. 16) 391,137 members; but in 1933 there were only 287,088.

On page 44 of the same speech we see that the Communist Party of Norway had 15,000 members in 1924, and 5,279 in 1933. The vote dropped from 60,000 in 1924 to 22,000 in 1933, while the vote of the Social Democratic Party in 1924 was 85,743, and the vote polled by the United Labor Party, opposed to Communism, was 500,000 in 1933.

Similar conditions are cited as prevailing in Czecho-Slovakia and England. The disgraceful debacle of German Communism under the impact of Hitlerism, and after a long record of threats of revolution against Fascism, is too well known to be labored.

In the countries cited Communism did have a considerable

following after the war. In others, notably Spain, Austria and the United States it never had more than a corporal's guard.

In this country the Communists in 1919 took something less than half the membership of the Socialist Party with them. They had some 40,000 members in 1920. In 1930 this number had fallen to 7,545. To-day the Communist Party boasts of an "increase" of its membership to 24,500. (Report to the 8th Convention—p. 81.)

It set out to "capture" the labor union movement. It has tried both "boring from within" and a policy of dual unionism with true Communist zeal and vigor. The "Report of the 8th Convention" on page 36 gives the American Federation of Labor a membership of 2,500,000 in 1933 (an understatement) and claims for the T. U. U. L. (Communist) Unions a membership of 125,000, of which 100,000 are "new".

Why has not the Communist movement made greater headway among the American workers? Why has it become a closed sect, with no influence on American life, remote from the American worker for whom it claims to speak?

The "Party Line"

The first, and obvious answer to these questions is that the Communist Party, from the first, has been dominated by the Communist International (Comintern). In its devotion to the theory of the "dictatorship of the proletariat", which was obviously meant to give the workers political and economic power in the transition from capitalism to socialism, it has fallen into the error of exalting dictatorship for its own sake. It has destroyed democratic discussion within its own ranks. It has expelled all members who did not accept the "party line". It has, in the classic case of Lovestone, permitted the Comintern to reverse, by cablegram, without hearing, the vote of ninety per cent of the delegates of a national convention, and to force upon it a leadership which it had itself repudiated. It has done these things in the name of "discipline", and for the ideal of a "monolithic" party. A monolithic party seems to be a party with but one thought, one voice, one direction.

Communists refuse to realize that American workers may submit to gangsterism in the unions and to machine bosses in politics, but will never accept in theory what they bow to in practice. They refuse to see that union gangsters and machine bosses rule by means of cajolery and bribery; that they seem to give something to the worker they dominate; that in fact they often, like Brindell, do give something. Communists fail to understand that even these dictators reserve the semblance of free discussion and the open ballot.

The rigid discipline of the Communists, their submission to outside control, their frequent "purges", their devotion to a ritual and theoretic purity have no appeal to the workers. So long as these conditions prevail—and they must persist so long as American Communism is affiliated with the Third International—the Communists will remain an isolated sect.

Trade Union Policy

Lenin and Marx both laid it down as a *sine qua non* that a revolutionary movement of the proletariat was impossible without the organization of the proletariat. American Communism set out in 1921 to win the labor unions. It met with little success, except in a few unions, chiefly in the needle-trades, where an earlier Socialist propaganda had paved the way. After a few years it became clear that the policy of "boring from within" was not likely to meet with early success. Nor is this surprising to any but a Communist.

They approached the rank and file of the unions with the assertion that the existing leaders were betrayers of labor, racketeers, labor-fakers and gangsters; they branded every contract with the employers and every strike settlement as a "sell-out"; they attacked the private lives of union leaders; where they had sufficient power to do so they packed meetings, interrupted speakers, and carried disruptive tactics to the point where often the work of the union could not be carried on. Where their broad-cast attacks happened to hit the mark, where racketeering was a fact, they unquestionably performed some

service, although at a terrible price. For the most part the effect of their activities in the unions was first to discredit themselves, and second to consolidate the alliance of the conservative rank and file and the leadership against all forms of radicalism. Thus they have retarded rather than advanced the revolution.

It is impossible, apparently, for the Communist to realize that a rank and file worker, however mistakenly, can be an honest conservative. He refuses to admit that a union leader may be reserved, slow to act, even timid, without being in the pay of the employers. He refuses to see that in a given situation it may be unwise to strike since a vast reservoir of scabs, or a small strike fund, or an unfavorable market make success remote. By their insistence on strikes, in season and out, and by their bitter attacks on those who counselled caution, the Communists created the impression that they wanted strikes, not that the workers might gain their objectives, but that the Communist movement might fish in troubled waters. This impression prevails to-day wherever Communists have been active in strikes.

In any case, "boring from within" seemed too slow and unsuccessful a process. In August, 1929, the Trade Union Educational League designed for "boring from within" became the curiously named Trade Union Unity League, and although the official myth was still that the Communists worked merely to win the unions from within, in fact a dual union movement was inaugurated. This has met with no more success than the earlier "boring from within", but it has served vastly to increase the bitterness of even radical unionists toward the Communists.

The "Report to the 8th Convention" states (on page 38) that the party is "moving towards the consolidation of all class trade union forces into a single Independent Federation of Labor." This is an open declaration of a "dual union" policy. It betrays the tactical bankruptcy of the Communist Party. It explains, even more than the internal structure of the party, why it has not made, and never will make, headway in America.

Strikes

The Communist Party has been very active in strikes of its own creation, and in others produced by objective conditions. It has been very anxious to demonstrate by such participation that it is in fact the destined leader of the revolutionary masses. It has been compelled to devote itself chiefly to strikes of unorganized workers, or of badly organized workers, since in other fields the A. F. of L. leadership was already at the helm. It has made a virtue of this necessity, and has dramatized itself as the leader of the lowest strata of the poor and the oppressed. In this rôle it has made a deep impression on middle class and bourgeois liberals and sentimentalists, and has become the pet of the new school of self-styled proletarian writers. But it has not particularly endeared itself to the workers whom it set out to help and to lead. In Gastonia, in Passaic, in Elizabethton, in San Francisco,—in fact wherever the Communists have led strikes, the story is the same. They come into a strike area with much blaring of trumpets and beating of drums. They seek to gain control of the situation by calling all other leaders "betrayers" and "fakers". They make rash promises, and make claims of exaggerated strength. When their strikes fail, they fold up their tents quietly and sneak away. They leave behind them a bitterness against them and against all radical ideas that only the years will eradicate. They leave no trace of an organization. Often they leave such chaos that union work in the fields they have deserted becomes impossible for years.

A case in point is the experience of the New York taxi drivers in 1934. Their strike was approaching a satisfactory settlement. Egged on, on the one hand by the Communists, and on the other by a group of racketeers, the men rejected the settlement. The strike went on. A few days later it was smashed. The "Report to the 8th Convention", on page 74, claims this as a victory. The taxi-drivers, it says, "are no longer afraid or ashamed that their union is being called a red union." The chief difficulty with this statement is that there is no union.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the T. U. U. L. claims 125,000 members, of whom 100,000 are "new". Most of the 25,000 old members are needle workers.* The 100,000 new members are the momentary dupes of the Communists—the workers who at the moment enjoy the questionable privilege of Communist patronage. When their strikes are over, and when they have been deserted, they will go the way of others out of the T. U. U. L. and 100,000 others will have taken their places.

"Innocent" Clubs

Realization that the movement was making little headway among the workers has led the Communists to make an effort to reach the farmers and middle-class groups. Thus far the winning of the farmer has progressed even less rapidly than the conversion of the worker. In the attempt to reach the farmer the Communist movement has used vote-catching and opportunistic devices that go ill with its pretensions to revolutionary "purity". The apogee of its opportunism was reached when it threw itself back of the demand for the Soldiers' Bonus.

In its attempt to enlist the middle class the C. P. organizes what are cynically known as "innocent clubs"—groups that are outwardly non-partisan, and inclusive of all shades of opinion, but that are in fact managed by the C. P. Chief among these are the National Student League, the International Labor Defense and the American League Against War and Fascism.

Through these organizations Communism is making greater headway among the middle classes than among the workers. The fight against war is popular; the defense of the Scottsboro boys appeals to many old-line liberals; the college student's hatred for military training and his despair when he faces a bankrupt capitalism that has no job for him, are easily capitalized for a romantic revolutionary theory.

It is axiomatic that the proletarian revolution will not be

* Present figures of the T. U. U. L. indicate a membership below 40,000.

the work of the middle classes. It is further shown by experience that in a crisis the middle class remains loyal to its institutions.

The test of the Communist movement is the extent of its influence on the working class. Overemphasis of work among the middle classes is a confession of bankruptcy. It is precisely in the middle classes that to-day we find the most vociferous acceptance of Communism in its most romantic forms.

No matter how great grow the Leagues Against War and Fascism, they will vanish at the breath of war. Many of the present members of these leagues and of the National Student Leagues may before long be in fascist ranks, if German and Italian experience have any validity.

Social Fascism

The intellectual and ethical bankruptcy of American Communism is evident in its ludicrous exploitation of the theory of "social fascism". To link Socialists with "their comrades-in-arms of the National Civic Federation" ("Report to the 8th Convention", p. 43) is stupid. The charge that Socialists want fascism, and work towards it needs no refutation.

Even more stupid is the insistence on a united front with the Socialist movement that, according to the C. P., is the tool of capital, that "betrays the workers", and "misleads" them to their destruction. Stupid is the manoeuver of the "united front from below", with its naive assumption that Socialist party members are gullible fools, taken in by their Machiavellian leaders.

The theory of "social fascism" was evolved to undermine the faith of the workers in the Socialist movement. It has proved the most effective aid to counter-revolution. In Germany it led to Hitler's victory, in that it prevented effective proletarian unity. As long as it is maintained, it brands as hypocrisy the Communist assertion that it wishes a United Front. In spite of its futility, in spite of its criminal stupidity, it is adhered to for fear that the Communist workers everywhere may learn that Socialism is a revolutionary movement.

It will be maintained, despite assurances to the contrary, until the Comintern orders its abrogation.

Revolution

After predicting revolutions that did not materialize, the Communist Party has postponed the revolution, and is concentrating on winning the smiles of the bourgeoisie. A section of the middle-class, having lost its property and its prestige is in a mood for blood. To oblige it the Communist Party speaks of revolution "some day". It speaks of "arming the workers" and of winning the adherence of the armed forces to the revolution. It never comes to grips with this question. Communists never speak of the cost of guns; of the forces potentially with the revolution and against it. They never consider precisely what, in a strategic and military sense, would constitute a revolutionary victory. They do not wish to face the fact that the armed forces of the United States are well-paid professional troops, far better off than they would be in private industry. To think of these men, and of the police, declassed, bought and paid for by the masters of industry, as potential revolutionists is Utopian with a vengeance.

When they are compelled to face this situation, the Communists speak of war, of war-weariness and defeat, of revolution after war. Are we to conclude from this that war is to be desired so that a revolutionary situation may develop?

What are Communists doing to prepare for revolution? They are conducting electoral campaigns that for opportunism put the worst of Socialist campaigns to blush. They adopt political programs that are mere catch-alls. They have swung all the way from a complete repudiation of immediate demands, to a platform crammed with reformist demands. For the rest their preparation for revolution is just talk.

It may perhaps be pointed out that revolutions must wait for revolutionary situations, and that these are not made by an act of the will. To speak of revolution now, to stir people up to revolutionary fervor when no revolutionary situation exists, to lead men to sacrifice their lives, as in the 1923 revolts

in Germany, with no preparation and no plan,—that is truly a betrayal of the workers.

The Negro

It remained for the Sixth Congress of the Comintern, in 1928, to solve the Negro problem in America. We have the word of the "Report to the 8th Convention" (p. 45) for it. Now we know that the position of the Negro in America is that of an oppressed nation. Russia had oppressed nationalities. So did England, Germany, Austria, Italy and other countries. Why should not the United States be equally favored? The Negroes were elected, and now the Communist Party can carry on its work knowing that in this, too, American capitalism is like all other capitalism.

Nothing exemplifies the idiocy that results from doctrinaire dictation of party policies better than this. That there are immigrant groups that better fill the place of oppressed nations is ignored. That the Negroes are exploited, more severely but in precisely the same manner as white workers doesn't matter. That the element of race, like the element of religion, is merely one more factor in helping the masters to keep the workers disunited is unimportant. No—the Negroes must be an oppressed nation.

We must "complete the bourgeois democratic revolution for the Negroes". The "basic slogan of Negro liberation is therefore the slogan of self-determination; the basic demand of the Negroes is the demand for the land." ("Report to the 8th Convention", p. 87.)

In Russia the land is being collectivized by force. In America, because the Negro is an oppressed nation, we must give him the land! It is the wonderful logic of Alice in Wonderland.

It will not do to treat Negro workers like all other workers. They must have "self-determination". This smells much of a desire to exploit to Communist advantages the vexed question of the Southern race question. It enables the Communist Party to appear to the Negro as the champion of his

racial rights. It enables it also to seem to say to the Southern whites, in effect, that in the event of a revolution the Negroes will be segregated, herded into a separate area, given "self-determination". What is the theory that the Negro is a "separate nation" whose cultural development has been retarded, but the old theory of Negro inferiority in a new form.

It may please some Negroes. It certainly gives unthinking Communists and some of their middle-class cohorts an opportunity to imagine themselves the champion of the Negro. But, for all that, it opens the door to Jim Crowism, to lynching and to all the evils of race-segregation.

Self Criticism

Communism has stifled free expression within the C. P. But it is sensitive to the charge that its dictatorship is rigid and unresponsive to criticism. For honest criticism through open discussion, the institution of "self-criticism" has been substituted. It functions in the Russian party, and so, of course, it must function in the American C. P.

On page 99 of that revealing booklet that every Socialist should own (The Report to the 8th Convention) we read under the interesting title "On Learning the Art of Self-Criticism" that

> "We are beginning to master, according to our own weak abilities, the art of self-criticism so ably taught to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union by Comrade Stalin."

Communists are very sensitive to the charge that in their organization, in their discipline and in their practices they resemble the Jesuit Order. Nowhere is this resemblance so clear as in the institution of self-criticism. Self-criticism is spoken of as an "art", like the art of prayer. It is as formal as the confession, and is accompanied, as is the confession, by the cry "Mea culpa—mea maxima culpa! I have sinned."

Self-criticism chiefly functions to advertise the individual Communist's realization that he is not perfect. The norm of perfection is the "general line" of the party. He measures his

"deviations" from the line, and with smug consciousness of well-doing, he publicly announces his sin, his realization of it, and his intention to do better. Never does self-criticism involve any doubt of the "general line", any more than a Catholic's confession involves any doubt of church dogma.

Self-criticism never becomes free discussion. The leaders of the party practice "self-criticism", but who criticizes them? Who in the party dares to criticize Stalin, or the Executive of the Comintern?

Propaganda

The devotion of the Communists to their propaganda is beyond question. They are ready to give of their time, effort and money with fanatic zeal. If mere quantity of published literature, and mere range of distribution were the measure of the effectiveness of a movement, the Communist Party would sweep all before it. No public question, however momentary, arises that is not dealt with in a book or a pamphlet. They print hundreds of propaganda leaflets each year, and distribute them by the hundred thousand. They have magazines devoted to every taste, and designed to meet the needs of all the social groups whose sympathy they hope to enlist. They stage pageants, demonstrations, parades, rallies, protests without end.

But mere quantity of propaganda literature is not the measure of effectiveness. In the tone and calibre of the printed word the bankruptcy of the movement is once more betrayed. One note, too loudly and too frequently struck soon loses its effect on the hearers. The shrill, insistent note of the Communist propaganda deafens the reader. The crudity of many of the statements made, the tone of bitter hostility toward all opponents repels more than it attracts.

When the San Francisco general strike occurred last summer the "Daily Worker" made it appear to be the first rumblings of revolution. Every strike in which Communists are engaged is pictured as a forerunner of the revolution. When Angelo Herndon was released on bail, the "Daily Worker" shouted that "mass pressure" had released him, although every

tyro knows that he was freed under $15,000 bail, and that he must still stand trial. Every gain in a trade union, real or imagined, is portrayed as a revolutionary advance. Every deed of government is, without discrimination, branded a malicious act of oppression. I have heard Communists complain in all seriousness that the "bourgeois press" neglected them while it gave Socialists an undue amount of space, whereas in fact every reader of the daily papers knows that the Communists are always "news", and the the Socialists have become "news" only since the Detroit Convention.

Noisy demonstrations have their use. It requires no profound knowledge of psychology to grasp the simple fact that they are truly effective only when they are infrequent and therefore striking occurrences. To many, the persistent noisiness of much of the Communist agitation becomes in the end a wearisome bore—in spite of the undoubted justice of the causes for which they demonstrate. And yet the Communists do not dare abandon their tactics of frequent and loud demonstrations. They have impliedly promised their adherents a revolution. It has not been forthcoming. But they can—and do— offer them a seemingly revolutionary activity. Through frequent demonstrations they keep the revolutionary fervor of their extrovert followers at fever pitch—although their demonstrations seldom attain their avowed aims. It has been cruelly charged that Communists really do not care about the "avowed aims" of their demonstrations. At times this charge seems amply substantiated.

The Third International

American Communism will continue to exist as a static organization, making no real headway, winning no considerable number of the workers, so long as the "Third International" pursues its present policies. As long as it exists it will be intemperate in its language, furious in its squirrel-cage activity, impressive to the middle classes in its romantic revolutionism,—and quite ineffective. Its sole real accomplishment will be counter-revolutionary insofar as it serves to bring dis-

union rather than union into the ranks of the workers.

But the decay and disintegration that characterize American Communism are phenomena common to the Communist parties the world over. The tendency to split into fragments (an inevitable result of the rigid "catholic" discipline that rules the party), the loss of membership, the loss of influence in the unions, the loss of political strength, are to be noted everywhere.

It is noteworthy that the "Third International", the parent body of Communism, has held no International Congress since 1928. A congress was scheduled for 1934. It was postponed without explanation again and again, and seems now to have been adjourned *sine die*. Leon Trotsky has asserted that there will never again be a Congress of the "Third International"; that, in fact ,the U. S. S. R. has no desire for such a Congress; and that the Soviet Union would much like to liquidate the "Third International".

At first blush such a statement seems an absurdity. Reflection makes it seem less impossible. The Soviet Union has established reasonably satisfactory relations with all capitalist nations. It has entered the League of Nations. The "Third International", a necessity so long as the U. S. S. R. was alone in a hostile world, becomes an embarrassment now that the world revolution has been indefinitely postponed. In the United States, in England, in France the Soviet Union has had to disavow responsibility for the acts of the Comintern. Yet it is common knowledge that the U. S. S. R. and the Comintern are one. What could be better, therefore, for the Soviet Union than to let the Comintern die?

And if it dies, where then will be American Communism? Who will then guide it, lay down the "correct line", invent its slogans, direct its elections, order its purges, and invent its ethnology? What a prospect for the Communist Party of America?

Make The Quarterly a Monthly

THREE YEARS OF THE ASQ

THE **asq** is celebrating its third anniversary. Three years is no great age for a journal, but to have survived for so long in the face of indifference, and of open opposition is an achievement of which the editors are justly proud.

For years, before 1931, the Socialist Party possessed no publications other than those devoted to the publication of party news and of general propaganda. Questions of far-reaching importance, as, for example, the emergence and growth of German fascism, the depression and the socialist reaction to it, were not discussed, save in the most superficial manner, because there was no medium for their discussion. In the meantime the world was flooded with "liberal" and communist interpretations of current problems. The pages of the "liberal" journals were open to communist propaganda, including communist attacks on and slanders of socialism and socialists. They ignored the socialist point of view. The daily papers featured the doings of the communists chiefly, perhaps, because of their bizarre news value. Socialism was presented as a decadent philosophy, listless, ineffective and sterile. There was no organ to give the lie to this campaign of neglect and misrepresentation. There was no avenue for the socialist analysis of communist distortion of Marxism. There was no medium in which theoretical problems, made insistent by the changing scene, could be discussed.

When, from time to time, the present editors of the **asq** urged the need for a socialist theoretical organ they met with a curious response. They were told that the party needed no theoretical clarification; that all the so-called problems that they raised had been settled long ago, and that anyone who cared to discover the socialist position on them could find it in the resolutions and declarations of the party and of the Labor and Socialist International. They were told this in the

face of the fact that the party included in its membership pseudo-communists who did not know they were communists, and men like Upton Sinclair and Joseph Sharts, who do not know the difference between socialism and social reform; in the face of the evident fact that never before had there been such confusion in party councils.

Again, they were urged to consider the cost of launching such a journal. An editor would cost so much; office rent, so much; printing costs, so much. A budget of several thousand dollars was assumed to be essential to the success of the enterprise. When the editors urged that all work should be contributed for love of the cause, they were condescendingly smiled at as crack-pot idealists.

The **asq** was launched. It did not die after the first issue. Instead it has grown to greater and ever increasing influence on the thought of the party. It has become a force heavily to be reckoned with, in the party and outside it. In its first number the **asq** announced its intention to give a Marxian interpretation of events. From this line it has not swerved, in spite of consciously false insinuations to the contrary.

The **asq** has been more than a journal. It has performed an important party service when it published the convention debate on the Detroit Declaration in 1934. Its reprint of Haim Kantorovitch's "Toward Socialist Reorientation" added an important item to the growing party literature. Its symposiums have furnished an opportunity for discussion of party affairs not offered by the usual party facilities.

By surviving for three years the **asq** has demonstrated that a theoretical organ was needed, and that a party activity can be conducted, and well-conducted, on a voluntary basis. The **asq** has had no expenses except those for printing, postage and a small office rent.

We have done more. Beginning with a few dollars contributed by the editors and their friends, we have built up a good circulation. We are growing rapidly. Among our subscribers we number every important college and library in the country. No longer do the "liberals" and the communists

monopolize the field. The **asq** is known and respected abroad. We have been able to enlist as contributors, without compensation, men of worldwide reputation.

The journal is not carelessly read and thrown aside. Copies pass from hand to hand until they are worn to shreds. Its articles are the basis for discussion at party meetings and wherever socialists get together. Subscribers carefully keep their files intact. So frequent has been the demand for back issues that the supply of back numbers is, in all but a few cases, exhausted.

The journal was launched as a private venture. The editors, however, always favored party ownership of the party press. It was a great satisfaction to them, therefore, when the National Executive Committee voted, in the fall of 1933, to make the **asq** the official national organ of the Socialist Party. The editorial staff was at the time increased. The paper entered then upon a new career of service to the party.

The revitalization of the party is not attributable to any one cause. The **asq** prides itself, however on the circumstances that in the rejuvenation that has taken place in American socialism it has played no inconsiderable role. It is eager now to cease being the asq. It wishes to become the **asm**—the **american socialist monthly.** It can realize this ambition if it can get 5000 new subscribers. To achieve that goal a drive is being launched.

There are 1300 locals and branches in the Socialist Party. If every party unit will do its share, it will be child's play to reach the mark we have set.

Subscribers and readers of the asq—

get one new subscriber today;

get your branch to subscribe;

persuade your local or branch to appoint an asq representative to solicit subscriptions;

get your local library to put the journal on its racks.

With your help the **american socialist quarterly** can become the **american socialist monthly** this year.

Book Reviews

REVOLUTIONS ARE BORN, NOT MADE

How to Make a Revolution, by Raymond W. Postgate, the Vanguard Press, New York. 199 pages—$1.75.

The author's conclusions may be epitomized in the phrase: It is easier to convert a majority of the electorate than to win a majority of the armed forces. Whether or not one agrees with this statement, it is obviously based on realistic reasoning rather than the blind worship of bourgeois democracy which usually animates such a conclusion. In other respects the book does not meet the rigorous specifications, some of which will be referred to below, that must be met by an adequate and comprehensive study of the road to power in present day capitalism. But then, so far as the reviewer knows, there is no study of the subject even approaching adequacy or comprehensiveness.

In summary, the author's views are as follows: There is no practical likelihood of obtaining power through an armed insurrection or a general strike (which are the only outstanding extra parliamentary methods the author even considers); that if any method offers any likelihood of success, and of this there is no certainty, it is the method of constitutional achievement of power; and that governmental office should never be surrendered by socialists until a workers' state is established so firmly that no election could possibly endanger the socialist society. Of course this is only another way of saying that only through the dictatorship of the proletariat can the forms of power be given substance and socialism be actually instituted.

Even the constitutional method, continues the author, does not have a chance of success either in the winning of a majority or the retaining of power, unless the workers' party is led by true revolutionaries (unlike the leaders of the German

and English parties) and such leadership cannot be obtained unless a disciplined vanguard nucleus is formed within the framework of the mass party.

The validity of these conclusions is vitiated by the fundamental defect from which the book suffers. The author discusses the various methods of obtaining power far too abstractly, as though they were equally suitable to all times and under all circumstances that may prevail under capitalism. He fails to adequately consider the economic and political background and the specific and highly varying circumstances that may prevail at the different times when attempts to take power are to be made.

For example, it is indispensable to a discussion of the problem to consider the state of the economic system at the time of an attempted revolution. A comprehensive consideration of the problem would have to begin with a treatise almost of the character of Corey's "Decline of American Capitalism", and should at least adumbrate the possible variety of economic circumstances that may exist at the various times when a bid for power is to be made. Without this, many basic factors in a revolutionary situation cannot be adequately considered. For example, economic conditions at a given moment strongly influence the strength of the contending classes, their confidence in themselves, their fear of each other, and the allegiance of the armed forces.

Nowhere does the author state whether a given tactic he is discussing is to be applied during a period of prolonged recovery, or short recovery between long periods of depression, or a period of steady economic retrogression, or a final catastrophic crisis. Thus, while Postgate states that extra parliamentary methods are doomed to failure (except after another world war, and in the unlikely event that this war does not wipe out all humanity), he fails to analyze the possible success of extra-parliamentarism in the event of a vast and far-reaching economic crisis, such as Marxists consider to be among the possibilities of capitalist development.

One illustration of the author's failure to properly apply

the principle that varying circumstances require varying methods is his statement that his conclusions are applicable to the United States as well as England. Such conclusions involve a prediction as to the existence or non-existence of a great number of possible factors to which we have previously referred. It is utterly unscientific to attempt now to predict the circumstances likely to exist in a comparatively remote revolutionary situation. The most characteristic feature of capitalist society is its dynamic nature, which produces continual changes in objective and subjective conditions. It is far more reasonable to admit openly that it is impossible to make any final predictions as to these imponderables and therefore to refuse to make any definite choice as to the method to be used in these unknowable circumstances. Far better to have a flexible program capable of accommodation to different eventualities, than to commit oneself now to a course of action which may be in direct conflict with that required by the actual circumstances. For America, at least, it would seem the part of wisdom to hold that the possible success or failure of parliamentary or extra-parliamentary methods cannot be determined at this time, that the primary task is today one of organization, and that the organization to be built must be capable of taking power by whatever means are necessary.

It therefore appears to the reviewer that the most important question facing us today is whether an organization of this character can be built. The answer is that it is not only possible but necessary to build such an organization, even for a party which believes that the constitutional method will succeed. This follows from the fact that a movement which will be capable of converting a constitutionally achieved majority into real power, must, far in advance of taking office, build almost the same extra-parliamentary institutions as are necessary to the achievement of power without benefit of parliament. For both purposes the workers must have a reliable following in the armed forces, an inclusive type of workers' organizations capable of fighting together with its sympathizers in the armed forces against the revolting capi-

talist class, and strongly organized unions capable of withholding their labor power and of running industry.

The author is too critical of the possibilities of extra parliamentarism and at the same time too uncritical of the possibilities of constitutionalism. He describes the difficulties of utilizing a general strike and violence to obtain power. He shows the possibility and perhaps even the probability of a parliamentary majority under given circumstances. Then, without presenting an adequate analysis of the difficulties in the way of that method Postgate concldes that only the parliamentary method should be attempted. For example, he fails to consider what policy the workers may be forced to pursue in the event that democratic means are withdrawn, and whether in view of that likely eventuality, it is not their duty to attempt to utilize every possible opportunity to seize power before its withdrawal.

The book is of value, however, in its fairly comprehensive consideration of the methods that have been pursued in past revolutionary situations and the possible methods to be used in the future. Perhaps the most valuable part of the book is the chapter in which he scathingly indicts the communists parties. The reason for this undoubtedly is that the chapter is based on the author's personal experiences, for he has run almost the complete cycle of the radical movement, from left to right. Fortunately, he has not moved far enough to the right to close the circle.

Robert Delson.

HUMAN EXPLOITATION

By Norman Thomas. Frederick A. Stokes Company, New York. $2.50

Comrade Thomas' "Human Exploitation" is a valuable addition to the growing library of books that is removing the theoretical supports of capitalism. The constantly reiterated boast of the apologist for things as they are is the alleged efficiency of capitalism. This efficiency is exposed as being

a pure myth. In point of fact capitalism is a system that involves incredible wastefulness of physical as well as human resources. There is no need to go into the results of widespread unemployment in terms of health, dietary diseases, etc. Nor is it necessary to show the figures of declining productivity in industry caused by the depression. The author draws the indictment in another and more telling form. For evidence, he calls upon numerous government documents, departmental reports, and statistics that cannot be accused of being hysterical. As evidence of capitalist efficiency we find the United States Coal Commission estimating that 100 million tons of coal are lost annually because of unplanned and unscientific mining; and that for every one barrel of petroleum that sees useful service, nine barrels are wasted. This record is not limited to the fuel industries. There is the sordid story of the stripping of America's forests, the criminal destruction of food, cotton, etc., to maintain price, the ruthless defertilization of large areas of land, especially in the South.

It is hoped, that after reading this book, no one will talk about returning to prosperity. During the "boom" years, less than one-third of the people lived prosperously. The rest were at, near, or below the poverty line. Housing conditions would seem to be the safest indication of the degree of financial well-being that existed. The plain fact is that one-third of America's workers lived in houses far below any standard of decency. The reason for that will be found in the chapter entitled "Working for Wages". The real wages of the worker did not increase in the 20th century, and he was therefore unable to assign a sufficient part of his earnings to improve his home. The health tables of working class districts as compared with others complete the tale.

The socialist will find much of interest in this book. The problem of reaching the white-collar worker and the farmer with socialist propaganda is of vital importance, and must be met realistically on the facts, Comrade Thomas glances the surface of these matters in the chapters on the farmer and the small owner. It is interesting to learn that in the state of

Oklahoma sixty per cent of the farmers are tenants, and that in 1932 forty-one out of every thousand farms were foreclosed. These and similar facts are going to bear on the socialist approach to the "non-proletarian" elements of the population, who, as Thomas recognizes, at present are raw material for fascism or socialism.

This book contains a wealth of material concerning the living and working conditions of Americans who must labor in order to live. Because of the broad scope of the work there is much that is necessarily sketchy. Nevertheless, the bare facts and figures have a simple eloquence that makes fascinating reading. Several men, could have written several books, each of which, dealing with one subject, would more thoroughly cover the particular ground. There is no one person more suited to paint this panorama of American working-class life, in prosperity and depression, than Thomas. When he writes of the share-croppers' shack, the miners' pellagra diet, the slum, the "Labor Struggle" from the point of view of the man on the picket line, the Negro, he discusses these out of a direct and unique experience with these sections of the American scene. This book will prove to be an invaluable aid to the radical propagandist who wants between the covers of one volume salient, damning information about capitalism.

Harold Siegel.

LITERATURE AND DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

By John Strachey, Covici, Friede, N. Y. $1.00.

In his recent book, **The Coming Struggle for Power**, Mr. Strachey compressed his analysis of literature between an outline of capitalist economics and a program of revolt, and although written with considerable verve, it appeared, to this reviewer, at least, as too narrow in interpretation and too specialized in approach in any way adequately to describe the place of literature in the development of capitalist culture. For this reason, Mr. Strachey's latest book, **Literature and**

Dialectical Materialism is most welcome as a fuller expression of his opinions on the question. On closer view, however, the work appears disappointing. Mr. Strachey's main interest is an endeavor to find a connection between literary and social development which will explain contemporary writing and its relation to contemporary economic conditions in terms of the class struggle. To be sure he is immune from that particular sectarian narrowness which condemns *a priori* any writer who is not an active revolutionary. "It would be indeed a blunder," he writes, "if we tried to pretend that a man was a bad poet because he was a bad Marxist, and a good poet because he was a good Marxist." In reply to Henry Hazlitt's attack on that critical school which stresses exclusively an author's class affiliations, he writes: "Now I think that it is important for Marxists to make it clear that when they have defined a writer as being bourgeois, or as being decadent, for that matter, they have by no means dismissed him. When we say, for example, that Proust and Joyce are both bourgeois and decadent, as we most certainly do, we are not denying that they were, and are, writers of genius. What we mean when we say that certain writers are bourgeois is quite simply that they wrote for and about the bourgeoisie." This indicates at least, a sense of literary values, but its value as defining classes of literature is vitiated by Mr. Strachey's own admission a few pages later on that all writers of today are bourgeois by his standard. Writing of Mr. Hick's criticism of Upton Sinclair in **The Great Tradition** Strachey says: "But on the same page he accuses Sinclair of writing for the middle class. Is this quite fair? Whom else could Sinclair write for? Whom does Granville Hicks write for? Does he expect the mass of American workers, excluded as they have been from access to American culture to appreciate his books? . . . He, too, writes for the intellectual middle class and the individual worker-intellectual." And certainly Mr. Hicks, whose work is one of "scope and maturity" is not a bourgeois writer. The definition of an author's middle class character must evidently lie elsewhere. But unfortunately, it is just this point which Mr. Strachey

glosses over. "He would, however, be a dolt," he writes, "who could not distinguish the differences of kind between the work of Joyce, Proust and Lawrence, and the work of Racine, Goethe and Shakespeare, for instance. . . . These writers (i.e. Proust, Joyce, etc.) were or are a part of existing civilization; existing civilization is in headlong decline. This fully accounts for the peculiar characteristics which we notice in its greatest writers." But the point is that this fact, true as it may be, is far from **fully** accounting for the character of the work of such men as Proust, Hemingway, Mann and others. It is just the connecting links between these authors' social beliefs and their literary credos which stand in need of further elucidation.

When he abandons general criticism to level his attacks on particular writers, Mr. Strachey is more in his element. Archibald MacLeish comes in for a good drubbing for the incipient fascism of his **Frescoes for Mr. Rockefeller's City** and the mildly liberal critics, like Mr. Krutch, and the nihilists like Hemingway fare no better. Granville Hicks wins high praise for his critical work, (Calverton's **Liberation of American Literature** is overlooked, for Calverton has deserted the true faith) but praise that is accompanied by a warning. "He (i.e. Hicks) hardly seems to pay enough attention to the writers as writers." For this we may be thankful. All in all, under a less pretentious title, Mr. Strachey would have furnished us some clever commentaries on certain contemporary writers, revolutionaries, counter-revolutionaries and 'fellow travelers'. But on the matter of relation between literary creation and dialectical materialism, his express theme, Mr. Strachey has little about literature that is new to tell us and less about dialectical materialism.

John Lester Lewine.

INDEX TO VOLUME III—1934

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BOOKS REVIEWED