

INDEPENDENT SOCIALIST LEAGUE  
\$14,000 FUND DRIVE-GIVE NOW!

# LABOR ACTION

MAY 9, 1949

A PAPER IN THE INTEREST OF SOCIALISM

FIVE CENTS

## ADA Senator Is Weak on Jim Crow

By R. L. FERGUSON

CHICAGO — When Senator Paul Douglas (Dem., Ill.) took the lead on the floor of the Senate in Washington recently to defeat the amendment calling for no segregation in federal public housing under the new bill which will provide almost \$3 billion aid for state and city projects in the next six years, his stand clearly indicated once again the hopeless position that the "liberal-labor" supporters of the Democratic Party are taking in current politics.

Not two weeks previously, Douglas was one of the darlings of the second convention of the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) held in this city. One of the heated disputes of that convention centered around a proposal, subsequently passed, on civil rights which stated:

"As we press for enactment of specific civil-rights measures, we must take every opportunity to lessen discriminatory practices by wise administration of programs for public housing, health and education. We believe, therefore, that legislation providing for these programs should contain provisions prohibiting segregation and other discrimination."

It would appear that nothing could be clearer. But not so fast! Merely because this was the opinion of the convention is hardly enough to make a "statesman" like Douglas uphold it when the chips were down.

### HONEST LIBERAL

In a classic statement of its type—that is, APPEASEMENT—Douglas said: "I do not believe in segregation, but I do know the Southern states are firmly committed to it. I don't want to disrupt the country in a critical period to force anti-segregation on them."

Senator Douglas is an honest liberal. That is, he will state his convictions but vote against them in the interests of some "higher" convictions.

He realizes full well that the North Atlantic Pact, which he voted for enthusiastically along with the same Dixiecrats whom he aided in defeating the housing anti-segregation amendment, will have to be implemented with the help of the Southern bourgeois. Consequently, he feels that he CANNOT fight Jim Crow in housing consistently since to do that would mean "disrupting the country in a critical period."

Although he eagerly assists in forcing U. S. imperialist policy onto millions abroad through the North Atlantic Pact he won't do any "forcing" against the rotten social system of his reactionary Dixie allies on foreign policy.

Yet another aspect of this whole question was the fact that the anti-segregation amendment was sponsored by Senator Bricker (Rep., Ohio). Everyone understands perfectly well that Bricker's strategy was to secure the defeat of the whole housing program in the interests of the real-estate lobby, of which he is a virulent representative. Bricker and Senator Cain have an unsavory record against the popular interests of the people as can be found. They hoped that by passing the amendment the Southern senators would be obliged to vote down the whole program.

In the defeat of the amendment is represented a "real triumph" for the Truman "Fair Deal" program: HOUSING—BUT SEGREGATED. It is in such manner as this that the recommendations of the president's Commission on Civil Rights have been, are, and will be further scuttled, provided the leaders of labor and the minority peoples continue in their ruinous policy of "not rocking the boat too much" and clinging to capitalist politics.

At the ADA convention there was a substantial minority of delegates who wanted their resolution on civil rights (Continued on page 3)

## Martin Abern

By MAX SHACHTMAN

There is burning grief in our hearts. Last Thursday, April 28, 1949, Martin Abern died. He was riding to work that morning in a Brooklyn bus when he slumped over quietly. His teeth bit into his lips against the last pain from the weakened heart that failed him.

It is still hard to realize that Marty is dead and no longer with us in the movement. He was in it as far back as any of us remembered, and farther back than that. He was so much and so long a part of the movement that we just felt he would still be in it when most of us were already gone.

He had just turned fifty. He was born on December 25, 1898, to a working-class family. His young life was lived in Minneapolis, where he became known to every militant and radical in the movement or around it. He worked his way through school as a newsboy, the best in the Twin Cities (he always recalled that with quiet pride). As a student, he made a brilliant record, and great successes as a business man of tomorrow were foretold for him.

But all of Marty's interests lay elsewhere. He had the rebel in him and it never left him. At the age of 15, just when the First World War broke out in Europe, he joined both the IWW and the Young People's Socialist League, but, inclined toward political action, he bent his energies to the YPSL and to the Socialist Party which he joined subsequently.

Entering the University of Minnesota, he soon won the sobriquet of the "campus radical." If he was tolerated, it was due, perhaps, to the fact that, conquering all political and racial prejudices, he became a star member of the university's championship football team. Sturdy of frame, square-shouldered, broad in the chest and with a bullneck, he had a character to match. He could

buck the line on a football field and he showed the same unbending tenacity whenever it was needed most in the difficult days of the movement.

### FOUGHT WORLD WAR I

When the United States entered the war, Marty shared the position of all the left-wing socialists against it. In those days, many of the best left-wingers manifested their opposition to the imperialist war by refusing military service on political grounds. Marty refused to put on the uniform. It brought his university life to an end, after less than three years. Arrested and tried, he served six months in a Minnesota prison.

He came out of it to devote himself exclusively to the fight for socialism. It was natural and inevitable for Marty to become a partisan of the great Russian Revolution of 1917, and to the end he never abandoned it. Marty never abandoned a cause he believed in, and if it became unpopular among philistines or cowards, he simply hunched his shoulders higher and kept going.

In the big fight between the left and right wings of the Socialist Party that opened up after the Russian Revolution and reached its peak after the founding of the Communist International, Marty took his stand prominently with the militants. Along with Abe Sugarman, then secretary of the Socialist Party of Minnesota, and Jack Carney, the left-wing leader in Duluth, Marty helped swing the Minnesota party and youth organizations into the left-wing column. The party split into three parts at its September 1919 convention in Chicago, and Marty went with the Communists.

A few months later, the Communist movement was cut to pieces and outlawed by the notorious (Continued on page 4)

## House Passes Wood Bill, Then Kills It; Taft-Hartley Stays

### Landlords' "Fair Deal": Raw Deal for Tenants

The landlords got their "Fair Deal" last Monday, on the same day that the Fair Deal Party's leaders in Congress decided to retain the unbending provisions of the Taft-Hartley Law.

Putting teeth into the rent law passed by Congress, Tigue Woods, Housing Expediter, has announced that rents are to be upped wherever necessary to give landlords a "fair" return. In the case of smaller properties (up to four units), after paying all operating expenses and depreciation allowances, they keep 30 per cent of the gross income (total rents paid). In the case of larger properties—even the very largest—they keep 25 per cent.

And if rents are not high enough to put this money into their pocket, the government will permit them to raise rents even if tenants are already paying the 15 per cent raise which landlords won conditionally a while back, as soon as the leases are up.

It was not even the reactionary 81st Congress which decided on these pocket-gouging figures. It was Tru-

man's housing agency. And Woods has announced that he's going to handle 1500 extra employees just to handle the expected "flood" of petitions for rent hikes. It is no longer necessary for a landlord to prove that he is a "hardship" case. In New York City alone, 10,000 application forms were distributed the same day.

The question immediately comes up: HOW did Truman's agency decide that 25-30 per cent was the "fair" take for the real-estate boys? Woods' announcement is specific on that. They made a survey of the country and found that this was indeed the median figure on real-estate profits for the years 1939-46. That makes it "fair!"

### GUARANTEED PROFIT

Does this mean a general rise in rents? "Mr. Woods," the newspapers report, "told newsmen that he did not expect all the petitions to result in increases, SINCE MANY ALREADY HAD BEEN GRANTED UNDER THE 1947 ACT."

Unlike the voluntary 15 per cent raise granted landlords previously, the present rent-gouge is not calculated on how much the tenant pays but how much profit the landlord is allowed. In a real sense, the new basis (while it temporarily conceals exactly what the effect will be on our pocketbook) is especially revealing of the government's standards of judgment.

An apartment-house owner, for example, who collects \$5000 a month in rents, is GUARANTEED a monthly income of \$1000—no less. (Interest payments would come out of this, but as even the Housing Expediter says, that can't be counted as operating expenses).

The 81st Congress gave the real-estate lobby what it wanted, and now Truman's agency completes their Fair Deal.

MAY 4—In spite of fundamental concessions already made by the Democratic leadership of Congress, a slim majority of the House passed the Wood labor bill yesterday. This is the bill which is Taft-Hartley under another name—almost literally.

### BULLETIN

As we go to press, the House—in a last-minute effort of the Democratic leadership to save face—has voted to send the Wood bill back to committee. This leaves the Taft-Hartley Law on the books, and bids fair to shelve any change at all for this session.

The day before, the Democratic speaker of the House, Rayburn, had already announced that his party was ready to accept that feature of T-H which is among its most reactionary: the injunction strikebreaking process. Most illuminating was his next comment: "This is what I thought should have been in it in the first place."

This acceptance of Taft-Hartley, said Rayburn, was no reluctant concession for him! No wonder these masked Democratic Taft-Hartleyites would have no burning desire to stop the more extreme version represented by the Wood bill!

The Dem-Republican coalition in the House has won out again. While it is still uncertain whether something as monstrous as the Wood bill can get through Congress as a whole, there is no doubt that labor once again has its back to the wall, in spite of its election "success." When will the labor leadership decide that they cannot depend on this party of capitalism which they enthusiastically voted into power last November? Isn't it time for every union militant to raise his voice loudly and confidently and demand the building of a LABOR PARTY?

By SUSAN GREEN

The House of Representatives, before which labor legislation is now being debated, is (Continued on page 2)

### Successful May Day Rally in New York Launches Independent Socialist League

## ISL Starts Rolling on May Day

### Left Socialists Greet New League

Messages of greetings and solidarity received by the Independent Socialist League from abroad were read last Sunday to the New York May Day rally reported in this issue.

They came from Juan Andrade, head of the Spanish POUM (Workers Party of Marxist Unity), from George Stone, editor of the British ILP's newspaper "Socialist Leader," and from a group of Irish Marxists.

### Andrade:

Dear Shachtman:

On the occasion of this May 1, I am happy to send my greetings of solidarity and most fraternal comradeship to the comrades of the new Independent Socialist League.

For four years, that is, since my emergence from the French prisons, I have followed very closely and with the greatest of interest all your activity, and have read all your publications. Because of this, I have been able to see how our political conclusions approach one another more (Continued from page 1)

### WP Conclave Greeted Natalia Trotsky, and Kutcher Defense Fight

The convention of the Workers Party, at which the Independent Socialist League was founded, also sent the following two telegrams of solidarity:

To Natalia Trotsky—  
"The fifth national convention of the Workers Party sends you its warmest comradely greetings of solidarity in our common struggle against capitalism and Stalinist barbarism and for socialist emancipation."

To the Kutcher Defense Committee: "The fifth national convention of the Workers Party expresses its solidarity in the fight of James Kutcher for full reinstatement to his job and joins you in condemning the onslaught of the government against civil liberties."

### Overflow Audience Hears Speakers On Goals and Ideas of New Group

NEW YORK, May 1—Before an audience of 250 that overflowed the hall, the newly formed Independent Socialist League was formally launched in this city simultaneously with the celebration of the international day of working-class solidarity, May Day.

With latecomers standing for lack of seating room, the organization held what was without doubt one of its most successful meetings, from all points of view, in the recent period. Offsetting the spirit of the crowd was the stunning news of the death of Comrade Martin Abern, which many in the audience heard for the first time from the platform. (See story on this page—Ed.)

Seated on the platform beneath the huge circular sign proclaiming the name of the ISL were the speakers: Max Shachtman, national chairman of the League, who spoke on "The Independent Socialist League—A New Beginning"; Nathan Gould, who spoke on Comrade Abern; Emanuel Garrett, on the ISL and the international socialist movement; and Justin Graham of the Socialist Youth League.

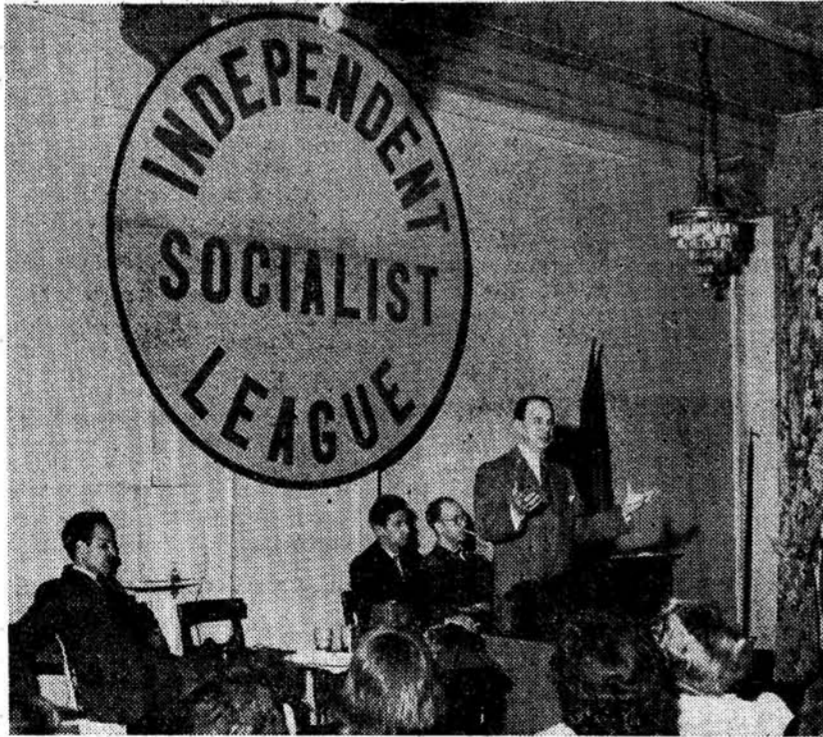
It was Comrade Garrett who officiated at the fund-drive collection held at the rally, and the audience responded magnificently. A total of \$425 was collected on the floor; several branches made announcements that they had passed the half-way mark in the attainment of their quotas. Many of those present had already contributed heavily.

### SPEECHES STRESS GOALS

Comrade Shachtman's speech emphasized that "This May Day is another witness of the fact that the socialist movement is in a state of crisis. The crisis is due to our failure to solve the crisis of society today, the road to peace." And "unless there is established a working-class

### Other Rallies

Reports on ISL May Day rallies held in a number of cities besides New York will be carried in LABOR ACTION next week.



### Fund Drive Reaches Quarter Mark In 2nd Report As N.Y. Takes Lead

By YETTA BARSH  
Fund Drive Director

As of May 2, this week's collections show a jump of 14 per cent. The pace set last week is being maintained! A total of \$2,060.86 has been received during the past week!

These gratifying results are the outcome primarily of the excellent efforts of our New York League. New York has done better than fulfill its last week's promise. It turned in a total of \$1,228.75, raising its collections to 56 per cent of its quota—6 per cent above its 50 per cent goal for this week.

While most of this sum represents contributions received from League comrades, we have been informed that a substantial portion of the total was received from friends and sympathizers of the League who responded even better than had been expected to the appeals of the New York comrades prior to and during

the excellent New York May Day meeting.

The comrades in charge of the Fund Drive in New York have been working hard and steadily—and they have been getting wonderful results. Hats off to New York! Our comrades there appreciate the weight of their portion of the national quota and are not only fulfilling their responsibility but are also setting the pace for the rest of the League.

### YOUTH LEAGUE AT BAT

However, the Socialist Youth League continues to hold its original lead in the percentage line-up. The Brooklyn SYL is second on our list—having achieved 80 per cent of its quota with its \$40.25 contribution this past week. Two other SYL units, Manhattan and Bronx, have also entered the race with their respective \$18 contributions. That places all New York City SYL units high up on the list—and we venture to (Continued on page 4)





