

LABOR ACTION

Independent Socialist Weekly

MARCH 24, 1952

FIVE CENTS

THE CASE OF THE FRIENDS OF FIGHTERS FOR RUSSIAN FREEDOM

... page 6

John L. Lewis' Strategy for 1952

... page 2

Bevan Scores Again in BLP

... page 3

Democracy and the Working Class

... page 4

Anti-Franco Committee Organized

A Committee to Defend Franco's Victims was organized on Monday, March 17 at the headquarters of the Workers Defense League in New York City. The meeting was held in response to an invitation by Norman Thomas in behalf of opponents of Franco's regime and was attended by unionists, Spanish-speaking anti-fascist organizations, the Independent Socialist League, the IWW, The Catholic Worker group, the General Defense Council, among many others.

Responding to the appeal of the Spanish anti-fascists in Europe against Franco's current reign of terror against opponents of his totalitarian regime, the new committee has gone into action to initiate a ceaseless campaign in behalf of the Spanish militants and against American aid to Spain.

THOMAS CHAIRMAN

It elected Norman Thomas chairman and Rowland Watts, National Secretary of WDL, secretary of the permanent committee. The committee is now preparing a series of actions to give the broadest possible publicity to Franco's latest murders.

While steps are being taken to enlarge the committee's support and to influence a nation-wide activity similar to the steps taken in New York, the meeting decided to organize immediate picketing of the Spanish consulate in New York City and to support the Freedom House meeting protesting the latest assassinations carried out by Franco against the CNT unionists.

TURN OUT!

The picketing will take place at noon on Thursday and Friday, March 20 and 21, and from 5 to 9 p.m. on Monday and Tuesday, March 24 and 25. Anti-fascist, anti-Franco banners will be carried and a leaflet inviting attendance at the Freedom House meeting will be passed out. The meeting at Freedom House will be held on Tuesday, March 25 at 8:30 p.m.

While the above meeting deals directly with the execution of the five CNT members, the picket line will carry signs protesting the new frameup trials in Barcelona, Vittoria (the Basque region) and Valencia, where Gerardo Baldris, head of the Workers Militia of the POUM of Madrid in 1936, is awaiting trial.

Readers of LABOR ACTION are called on to attend the public meeting at Freedom House and to turn out on the picket line of the Committee to Defend Franco's Victims.

SAVE FRANCO'S VICTIMS! Workers Defense League Calls For Anti-Franco Rally, Pickets

FRANCO IS MURDERING TRADE UNIONISTS. You can put a stop to it. On March 13, five were executed but six were saved through protests organized by the Workers Defense League in the United States and by mass meetings in Europe.

The five who died could have been saved if America had raised a stronger voice. Other unionists are now awaiting trial in Barcelona and Vittoria. You can save their lives by your protest now. There will be a meeting at

FREEDOM HOUSE

TUESDAY, MARCH 25 AT 8:30 P.M.

It is absolutely necessary that this meeting of protest be filled to overflowing so that American officials will know that we will no longer tolerate cooperation with Franco's program of extermination of free labor. Speakers will include Professor Robert Alexander who has just returned from Spain, James Carey, Norman Thomas and others.

But the speakers are not what will count. What may make the difference between life and death for these men is your presence at the meeting and participation in these protests. COME.

Rowland WATTS,
National Secretary

U.S. Proconsul Intervenes in Greece To Lay Down Line on Gov't System

By MARY BELL

In an unusually brazen manner that can only endear it to Stalinists seeking fresh material for cold-war propaganda, the United States has intervened in the current troubled political situation in Greece through its Ambassador John Peurifoy, who was in turn backed by the State Department.

Peurifoy, with an eye to the administration of Marshall Plan funds and the role of Greece in NATO, publicly stated that his government frowned upon the re-adoption of the simple proportional representation system because "its inevitable consequence of continuing governmental instability would have a disastrous effect upon the efficient use in Greece." He warned that the U. S. did not favor the existence in Greece of small parties and coalition cabinets.

According to the New York Times (Mar. 15) Peurifoy "seemed to advocate a two-party system that would give to one party or another the chance to govern the country in stability over a reasonable period of time."

The Times' first dispatch from its Athens correspondent stated that Ambassador Peurifoy's intervention won "more praise than dispraise" and "more applause... than cries of protest against him." Until the very next day, that was.

Immediately following Peurifoy's denunciation of proportional representation, Sophocles Venizelos, acting premier during the illness of Premier Plastiras and head of the Liberal Party, stated to the press in a direct rejoinder that while the Greek people ap-

preciated American aid, "it is a privilege of the Greek people and the government to decide about the electoral system by which the country will be governed on the basis of constitutional principles."

Two days later, the March 17 Times had to head the story over its Athens dateline "Peurifoy 'Affair' Boils Up in Greece." Only the supporters of Field Marshal Alexander Papagos, leader of the Greek Rally, parliamentary opposition, and one of the two major parties, came to Peurifoy's side.

FAVORS REACTION

In desiring a parliamentary system by "majority rule," the effect wished by the United States is the creation of a government more or less in its own image but more to its liking in any case. For the elimination of proportional representation would have the effect of eliminating all the smaller, minority parties which now have representation. In Greece, it would tend to eliminate all but the Liberal and Greek Rally groups, the two important bourgeois parties.

Such a two-party system is less democratic, less expressive of the wishes of the populace than proportional representation.

In the current situation in Greece, the U. S. maneuvers are not merely a pious wish for a strong government. They play directly into the hands of the most conservative and reactionary forces in Greece, represented by the Greek Rally party, which is strongly praising the action of Peurifoy. Premier Plastiras' apparently re-

UAW Exec Takes Over Ford Local

By WALTER JASON

DETROIT, March 16—After a one-day hearing, at which the Reuther leadership acted as prosecutor, judge and jury, the international executive board placed a six-man administration over Ford Local 600, in spite of vigorous protests of the duly elected officials of that local union, the largest in the world.

Thus today, the Reuther forces are in control—at least until the next election—of a local union which they have been unable to win at any time by democratic secret elections since President Walter P. Reuther assumed full leadership of the UAW-CIO in 1947.

The main charge against the four top officers of Ford

Local 600—Carl Stellato, president; Pat Rice, vice president; Bill Hood, recording secretary; and Bill Grant, financial secretary—was that they were derelict in their duty because a small clique of the Communist Party was the real leadership of the local union.

Less than three months ago, Carl Stellato, confronted by similar accusations at a special board hearing, challenged Reuther to prefer charges against him and the other officers under the provisions of the union constitution. These would have been heard by a special trial board, as set up at the last international union convention. Undoubtedly, this would have been a far more democratic method—and for Reuther, a more dangerous one—than the legal but bureaucratic amputation now taking place. The prosecutor and the jury would not be the same individuals.

When the news of the administrators over Ford Local 600 broke in the headlines, right after the congressional committee cut short its hearings and left town, an old-time right-winger made the remark, "I can remember when we used to beat those b-----s in elections."

This pithy comment summarizes the whole situation, and the problem.

THE G-MAN BOARD

Why has the Reuther faction been unable, with 90 per cent of the UAW in its control, to build a cadre of union leaders and unite them on a sound progressive program that would smash the influence of Stalinism in the way that counts most, by defeating them in elections, by winning the rank and file away from their influence? Ford Local 600 is no different in composition from other UAW locals in this area. There seems little question but that Reuther has disavowed his one-time method of defeating Stalinism by a superior program and leadership.

The six administrators over Ford Local 600 are Walter Reuther, Vice-Presidents John Livingston and Richard Gosser, the two West Side regional directors,

(Turn to last page)

(Turn to last page)

New Hampshire Merry-Go-Round

By GORDON HASKELL

The New Hampshire primary election has been dominating the news columns of the nation's press for the past few weeks. This is, perhaps, another demonstration of how a molehill can be turned into a mountain if enough columnists and reporters are assigned to the job.

Just what did the New Hampshire primary "prove"? Frankly, not much. Perhaps one of the successful candidates, Senator Kefauver, had a point when he said it proved that the people would like to see "new faces" in the government. In a campaign in which there were so many unknown factors, and in which so many of the known factors (the candidates) left so little room for choice, this may have been a consideration. His remark about "new faces" as the burning issue of the day is interesting as an unwitting reformulation of the charge that the elections present a choice between Tweedledum and Tweedledee.

The campaign "proved" also that the major Republican candidates are rolling in money. Modest estimates put the figures spent at \$150,000. "Supporters of Taft and Eisenhower," says Labor for March 15, "virtually carried money bags in on wheelbarrows. The bulk of the outside cash came from the Ohioan's rich backers."

How did labor fare in this insignificant campaign? Our only information to date comes from Murray Kempton's column in the

New York Post of March 17. He writes that the CIO Political Action Committee made 5,000 Truman phone calls, and after considerable effort succeeded in forming a United Labor Committee for Truman. Yet the workers voted for Kefauver.

"AFL political director James McDevitt," writes Kempton, "wrote to enjoin state AFL officials to stay neutral; most plumped for Mr. Truman anyway. The teamsters, with rare fealty to old Dan Tobin, went all out for Kefauver. And nowhere in New Hampshire could the pro-Truman laborites find a solitary railway brother who would join their committee." (Truman was breaking their strike over the week-end.)

LOOSE AND RUNNING

"The labor voter is loose and running," Kempton continues. "At least for the moment, the union political machines can't deliver him to Mr. Truman on short notice. CIO professionals back from New Hampshire would say nothing more optimistic than that their people aren't implacable yet. Maybe 50 per cent of them would yield to a heavy pro-Truman pitch."

All this was pretty much in the cards not only for labor in New Hampshire but for labor on a national scale. The whole political line-up in the country is so unsure that even the traditional Fair Deal orientation of most of the labor movement is at loose ends.

Today the administration is better known for its corruption than for a crusade in the cause of the little man. It is more active in breaking strikes and turning down wage demands than in

any other sphere of specifically "labor" politics. Its foreign policy is in a mess, and in any event can't be distinguished from Eisenhower's. The only "labor" people Taft can get behind him are those he puts on his payroll. (For instance, his Wisconsin "Labor Committee for Taft.") Kefauver is a "new face" made famous by television, but it is likely to get quite tiresome when the campaign brings out the fact that there is nothing behind it that labor wants.

As the New Hampshire primary really proves nothing, we can't even claim that it "proves" that labor is in a political blind alley from which it can emerge only by forming its own political movement and running its own candidates. That idea had occurred to us long before the ballots were cast in the Granite State. But one thing is certain. Nothing that happened there points in any other direction.

UAW Ford Local —

(Continued from page 1)

Ed Cote and Joe McCusker, and also Emil Mazey, secretary-treasurer of the international union.

The size of the problem is reflected in this new precedent—a six-man board of administrators. It also makes responsibility shared by all top leaders. There'll be no Brutus, if Reuther finds himself in trouble over this one.

The four top officials of Ford Local 600 bowed quietly to the edict. They are placing their hopes in the next local union election, which is only sixty days away. The first heated and bitter reactions in Ford Local 600 were changed into a calm and calculated attitude by the anti-Reuther forces out there.

A major role might be played by the Ford company. The local union, like every other part of the UAW, has a plague of unsolved problems. Suppose the administrators obtain some concessions not now attainable—will that influence the election? Or will the Ford company decide to do as many electrical industry corporations do: play both ends against the middle, in the hope of keeping the Ford 600 situation in turmoil?

WHY NOW?

One may ask why an administrator is put over the local now, when elections are so close anyhow? There are some obvious reasons. Reuther felt the pressure of the daily newspapers and the congressional committee hearings. This is his demonstration of "anti-Communism."

Secondly, by taking over the local, the Reuther leadership has silenced the one major anti-Reuther newspaper in the UAW, *Ford Facts*. This certainly will be a handicap to the Stellato forces.

Thirdly, there is a strong possibility that now the UAW top leaders will bring some Ford Local 600 officials to trial, and keep them so occupied with that problem that electioneering will be far more difficult. Besides, these officials might be ruled off the ballot if they are standing trial at the time.

Two major witnesses against Ford local officials at the hearings are on the staff of the UAW. They were Lee Romano, former vice-president of Local 600, and Shelton Tappes, for years the most bitter critic of Reuther.

The third witness was Dave Averill, until three days ago the editor of *Ford Facts*. He told the committee what was obvious to every UAW activist, namely that the Stalinists had free run of the paper, and that he was merely the "copy boy," not the real editor.

Interestingly enough, Romano in his testimony swore under oath that he knew that neither Stellato nor Rice nor Hood nor Grant were members of the Communist Party.

The reaction in the rest of the UAW in the Detroit area is difficult to judge. Reuther foresaw the possible disturbing effect of this action on UAW secondary leaders. In another unprecedented move, 34 local union presidents were invited to sit in on the hearings, which they did. Two major caucus meetings of the Reuther faction have been called for this coming week at which Reuther

'Labor's Friends' & Political Bums

From the Midwest Labor World (St. Louis), February 27:

The Fresno, Calif., Labor Council recently conducted a spot check and learned that only 37 per cent of the members in affiliated unions are registered to vote.

We hope the labor movement in most cities can show a better record, but are confident that nowhere will you find an overwhelming majority registered.

The answer to this condition lies in registration drives and education to show lagging members how politics affects their lives and their pocketbooks. But we suspect that's not the complete answer.

There are some stupid workers, but nobody can tell us that all but 37 per cent of the union members of Fresno, Calif., are stupid. The fact probably is that many of these unregistered voters know the score very well, but see no use in choosing between two no-good candidates, neither of whom stands for anything in particular. They have seen too many political bums ballyhooed as "labor's friends."

Registration drives are a necessary step. Education on political issues is a necessary step. The next step—and one that has been too often forgotten—is for union political committees to make sure they aren't trying to beat something with nothing.

Ballyhoo can sell all the seats of a theater, but if the show isn't any good, the seats will be empty on the second night. The same is true in politics.

U.S. Proconsul —

(Continued from page 1)

barometer of the sentiments and feelings of the entire populace. The "strong government" so ardently desired in Greece (and France) will inevitably serve to bottle up and stifle a part of the voice of the electorate. Minority shades of opinion—as is pre-eminently the case in the United States—will have no chance for a parliamentary voice.

The strongest of governments are those of the totalitarians, who "eliminate instability" by stifling all dissenting opinion, and there-

by merely substitute one kind of crisis for another. And apparently the forces in Greece now rallying behind the U. S. position are those which would, if and when possible, dispense with all elections.

In order to "strengthen the forces of democracy" in the shaping struggle against "totalitarianism" the U. S. has again assisted reactionary forces by reactionary means. In the fight against "reaction," any ally, even a reactionary one, is welcomed by Washington.

Choice Stoolie —

(Continued from page 3)

December of that year." The witness could not say of this recent event what he had said of others when "he commented that he was being asked about matters that occurred five years ago when he joined the Communist Party at the suggestion of the FBI and agreed to make reports on meetings and names of attendants."

More testimony of this sort and the public may begin to lose interest in the trials, in spite of press headlines and editorial fanfare. Los Angeles has been subjected to a regular heavy dose of "red exposés" for years. The Hollywood probes were squeezed for all they were worth by the press. Then for some time before the

trial began the "revelations" of informers about Stalinist infiltration into professional groups in the metropolis occupied the editorials, columns, and news reports. There are signs that people want a change in diet, that they are losing interest in local "communism."

But mere apathy may be as dangerous for democracy as public hysteria, for the real nature of Stalinism is obscured and, perhaps even more important, the full implications of the government drive, its charges, the acceptance of spies and informers as ordinary, commonplace methods, and the creeping inroads on civil rights toward the garrison state.

The FIGHT for SOCIALISM

by Max Shachtman

A basic primer in the principles and program of Independent Socialism

\$1.00

Cloth-bound \$2.00

INDEPENDENT SOCIALIST PRESS

114 W. 14th St.

New York 11, N. Y.

You're Invited

to speak your mind in the letter column of LA. Our policy is to publish letters of general political interest, regardless of views. Keep them to 500 words.

Next —

A Labor Party!

by Jack Ranger

A Hard-Hitting, Meaty Presentation of the Need for an Independent Labor Party

25 cents Order from: Labor Action Book Service 114 West 14 Street New York 11, N. Y.

The Handy Way To Subscribe!

LABOR ACTION Independent Socialist Weekly 114 West 14 Street New York 11, N. Y.

Please enter my subscription: NEW RENEWAL 6 months at \$1.00 1 year at \$2.00

NAME (please print)

ADDRESS

CITY

ZONE APT.

STATE

Bill me. Payment enclosed.