

LABOR ACTION

Independent Socialist Weekly

SEPTEMBER 29, 1952

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Vote for George S. Counts, Liberal Party, for Senator

A Statement by the New York ISL—To New York Voters

The nomination of Professor George S. Counts as candidate for the Senate of the United States marks the first time that the Liberal Party of New York has run one of its leaders, a vice-president of the organization, for a high elective office.

It is true that the Liberal Party did not want to run an independent candidate against the Republican incumbent, Senator Irving Ives. It would rather have

supported a "strong and winning" candidate of the Democratic Party on the Stevenson-Sparkman ticket which it had already endorsed.

But the state and local Democratic Party bosses would not have it so. They resisted the pleadings and admonitions of the Liberal Party leaders to nominate a Fair Deal, or progressive, Democrat like Averell Harriman and placed on the ballot instead an old political

wheelhorse, Brooklyn Borough President John Cashmore.

In doing this, the Democratic bosses, still smarting at the defeat administered to them by the Liberal Party when it nominated and elected Rudolph Halley for president of the New York City Council, slammed the door on the Liberal Party.

Thus, in much the same way that the Liberal Party was compelled to nominate

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Nixon: The One Who Got Caught

The \$18,235 question of "Poor Richard" Nixon's special political kitty, raised for him by an assortment of kind backers, real-estate operators, industrialists and oil magnates, has been tossed by him (via radio and TV broadcast, costing \$75,000) to the Republican National Committee for decision. The decision is supposed to be whether or not Senator Nixon remains as the vice-presidential candidate

of the Republican Party and running-mate of General Eisenhower, whose main theme has been the crime and corruption of the Democratic Administration.

Nixon's broadcast gave little further information on the special fund than had already been made public. The rest of his speech was compounded by demagoguery, sentiment, personal appeal

based upon a recital of his family fortunes, war record, citations, mortgages, gift of a cocker spaniel to the Nixon children, etc., winding up with the usual witch-hunt spiel on Communists in government, Alger Hiss, the Korean casualties, and the plug that Eisenhower is an honorable man, and that it's time for a change.

FOR THE "CAUSE"

After fulminating about the "smears," "crooks" and "communists," Nixon (and those who support him, including the Taftites who saw nothing wrong or irregular in Nixon's behavior) proceeded to a complete justification of his conduct because he used the special fund not for personal expenditures but in the fight against "communism and corruption." It is noteworthy that this ardent fighter against "communism and corruption" had to have special funds to carry on his fight, and that this resulted in the unprecedented necessity for the vice-presidential candidate to interrupt a campaign to explain charges of corruption on his part. It is equally noteworthy that Nixon is of the breed of McCarthy (who defended Nixon before he spoke), Jenner, and others who have helped to inflate the "communist" issue out of all proportion to its actual value and to create the stifling and hysterical political mood in America today. Nixon stated that it would be

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NOW PLAYING!

CHARLIE CHAPLIN in "Our Country and Its Culture"

(Title Suggested by Partisan Review)

Produced by H. S. TRUMAN Directed by J. P. McGRANERY Script by JOE McCARTHY

By HAL DRAPER

It is as if the United States is seeking to bolster the already widespread feeling of cultured Europeans that the land of Coca-Cola and comic strips is a new barbarism of the machine age—or perhaps it is seeking to prove to Senator McCarthy's admirers that the Democratic administration is as rough on "Communists" as it is supposed to be in an election year—or perhaps it is simply that the police-state measures already taken in the American witchhunt have their own momentum and their own logic.

Truman's attorney general has issued an order to bar Charlie Chaplin from the country until the immigration service has determined in a hearing whether America is a fit place for him to live—only he put it the other way, under the impression that the hearing would determine Chaplin's fitness to live behind the curtain of the Subversive List.

To many Americans Charlie Chaplin is simply a comedian. Even more in Europe and elsewhere than in this country, Chaplin is regarded as one of the world's greatest artists.

The viciousness of the government's witchhunt against the known functionaries of the Communist Party has been disconcert-

ing enough even to pro-American leaders in Europe. (For example, when the British Tory government recently refused to take action against the pro-Russian propagandist who holds the post of dean of Canterbury, Churchill went out of his way to make a cutting allusion to red hunting policies in "other countries," (meaning the U. S.)

HONOR

To this there was next added the passport barricade erected by the State Department against prominent scientists and literary men from abroad who sought to visit here. The government was successful in convincing more than one group that it could not hold international scientific conferences in this land of the free.

Now it's Charlie Chaplin. With the usual finesse, Attorney General McGranery waited until Chaplin had sailed before banging the gate. The actor had

applied for a re-entry permit before sailing. It took three months for the government to decide to give him one, during which time the Keepers of the Gate presumably looked into his desirability as a resident. But the re-entry permit was issued to him, and only

after this official promise of re-entry was made did the attorney general announce that it was a worthless scrap of paper.

Chaplin, of course, has always been particularly vulnerable to the patrioteers. There is good reason

(Continued on page 2)

Another Part of the Forest

By coincidence, a Japanese version of the Nixon scandal recently emerged in that country's press, too. A magazine, *Seikai Jeep*, published a letter written by a member of the Diet who is campaigning for re-election, written to his backer. The poor man is down to his last few yen and informs his angel that if re-elected, he will "face all dangers for the advance of your business."

For those who wonder what Nixon did with the money, the Japanese story may be examined to provide a clue. Every time members of municipal town and village councils in his constituency visit Tokio with petitions they have to be given dinner and theater parties. Other constituents visiting the capital and needing entertainment include parties of school children, bereaved parents and one-man deputations.

The Diet member sent out 30,000 New Year greeting cards, a large number of cards and letters inquiring after the health of numerous voters, and 50,000 letters of thanks after a visit to his own area. "Fixing" other Diet members,

and getting around some awkward spots cost a big slice of money, as did publicity, meeting halls and traveling. When hiring the local temple for a meeting it pays to donate a high fee for its use—otherwise, explains the candidate, "the corrupt priests will spread unpleasant propaganda against you." This harassed man resented such corruption.

In addition, he explains that he is "exhausted in mind and body" and needs a stiff treatment in vitamins and hormones and such, so as to keep up with the younger and more sprightly candidates.

It is clear, in other words, that our candidate was using the money to "fight Communism."

Across the other ocean, in Britain (no relation to the Nixon affair—it was before it broke), the *Socialist Leader* declares that "Some members of Parliament get payments or gifts from special interests who may have no connection with the constituency represented. Yearly 'retainers' for services rendered are not unusual among MPs."

The ISL Program in Brief

The Independent Socialist League stands for socialist democracy and against the two systems of exploitation which now divide the world: capitalism and Stalinism.

Capitalism cannot be reformed or liberalized, by any Fair Deal or other deal, so as to give the people freedom, abundance, security or peace. It must be abolished and replaced by a new social system, in which the people own and control the basic sectors of the economy, democratically controlling their own economic and political destinies.

Stalinism, in Russia and wherever it holds power, is a brutal totalitarianism—a new form of exploitation. Its agents in every country, the Communist Parties, are unrelenting enemies of socialism and have nothing in common with socialism—which cannot exist without effective democratic control by the people.

These two camps of capitalism and Stalinism are today at each other's throats in a worldwide imperialist rivalry for domination. This struggle can only lead to the most frightful war in history so long as the people leave the capitalist and Stalinist rulers in power. Independent Socialism stands for building and strengthening the Third Camp of the people against both war blocs.

The ISL, as a Marxist movement, looks to the working class and its ever-present struggle as the basic progressive force in society. The ISL is organized to spread the ideas of socialism in the labor movement and among all other sections of the people.

At the same time, Independent Socialists participate actively in every struggle to better the people's lot now—such as the fight for higher living standards, against Jim Crow and anti-Semitism, in defense of civil liberties and the trade-union movement. We seek to join together with all other militants in the labor movement as a left force working for the formation of an independent labor party and other progressive policies.

The fight for democracy and the fight for socialism are inseparable. There can be no lasting and genuine democracy without socialism, and there can be no socialism without democracy. To enroll under this banner, join the Independent Socialist League!

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MARXISM for TODAY

How to Discredit Marxism: A Current Example

By PHILIP COBEN

It's been made clear in this column, we think, that the defense of Marxism against its ignorant or not-so-ignorant critics of today has another side also. The aforesaid ignorant critics have as their bisymmetric counterpart the ignorant "Marxists" whose manhandling of the subject feeds the former's prejudice.

This is especially noticeable with regard to the Marxist historical approach—the know-nothing "Marxist" presents it as vulgar economic determinism in the crudest sense, and the know-nothing anti-Marxist proceeds to attack it as such. But the same is true of other questions.

In this column we want to exhibit an especially sorry example of a know-nothing "Marxist" to set side by side with the anti-Marx critics whom we have previously discussed. It is precisely the sort of thing which feeds the efforts of those who would discredit the Marxist theory.

It is "the first of a series of articles" by Ernest Untermann on "recent developments in science" for the *Socialist Call* (September 19). Now this is the Ernest Untermann who translated Marx's *Capital* and we do not question his knowledge of Marxist economics. What he is writing about here is another subject, however. And he seems to be under the impression—too often maliciously ascribed to Marxistists by their enemies—that a knowledge of Marxist ideas is a sufficient basis for passing judgments and drawing conclusions about fields with which he is not acquainted.

It is all the more regrettable because Untermann's over-all thesis is indubitably true: that "our most modern physics still is a stamping ground for various peddlers of metaphysical mysteries." There have been some excellent refutations of the idealist and positivist notions which some philosophers and scientists—posing-as-philosophers have attempted to hitch onto the wagon of science.

ON THE CRACKER BARREL

But Untermann's "refutations" are strictly of the cracker-barrel variety. For example, the above-quoted remark about the peddlers of metaphysical mysteries is immediately followed up and supported by this extraordinary argument:

"They are supported by some higher mathematicians who perform hocus-pocus with the square root of minus-one and the multiplication of minus-X by itself. I have never been able to pay my bills by multiplying minus-one dollars. . . ."

One hopes that Untermann was merely trying to be gay and sprightly but, really, there is no indication that he does not actually regard the mathematicians' imaginaries as being on the same level as flying saucers with little green men from Venus aboard.

This fantastic article is too full of such things. Like:

"The boys who tell us that the universe is expanding revel in the assertion that the galaxies farthest from us are rushing out of sight with the speed of light. . . . I don't understand how a galaxy with nebulae, gas balls and solid globes can hang together at that speed."

Leaving aside his description of a galaxy and some other things, Untermann obviously is way behind even the elementary notions of modern astronomy which one can painlessly pick up from a popular science magazine. In wondering how a

galaxy can "hang together at that speed," he would seem to be thinking of the velocity of a galaxy, with relation to us as observers, in the same way as if it were a railway train on a bumpy roadbed.

HE THINKS IT'S "TERMINOLOGY"

He refers scornfully to the "so-called absolute axioms of abstract mathematics and metaphysical philosophy," as if talking about the same thing in both cases. He says that Newton "relied upon the assumption of an ether absolutely at rest for holding things together," and then, referring to the Michelson-Morley experiment, describes it as an attempt "to measure the effect of the ether on the motion of the earth [it attempted to measure the effect of the ether and the motion of the earth on the velocity of light] but naturally the effect of something undefined [the ether] could not be discovered." It is news indeed to read that as long as a phenomenon cannot be "defined" its effects cannot be discovered. Electricity, perhaps?

Or: "Ernest Rutherford identified the atomic nucleus. He saw alpha and beta rays."

Or, without comment, which would run too long, this last conclusion: "It would be a great help to future progress if the mathematicians would bring their terminology into better accord with the facts. Such terms as 'the four-dimensional continuum,' in which time is used as a fourth dimension, or the idea that curved light rays imply a curved space, or that the speed of light forbids the simultaneous occurrence of events in different cosmic systems, do not contribute to clarity of thought. They may be indispensable to calculators who want their equations to come out right, but they add a metaphysical touch to relativity which throws a monkey wrench into the scientific works."

NO SLOT MACHINE

The whole thing is a weird caricature of a "profound" discussion of idealist trends in modern scientific thought. What I wish to point out is that here is a man, who did not learn about Marxism only yesterday, who is clearly quite ignorant of his subject matter but who comes in print with a "Marxist analysis" of it. Whatever inspired Untermann to do this, there are others, usually much newer to Marxist thoughts, who, in their discovery of the immense power of the Marxist method, tend to regard it as a rule-of-thumb which answers questions like putting a coin in a slot-machine. Marxism is an indispensable guide to understanding the facts of life but it is not a substitute for the facts.

Similarly, in the case of Marxist historical theory, a young student of Marxism may be struck all aheap by the fruitfulness of a class interpretation of events—and something like this may be the result: "Roosevelt was for capitalism because he himself was a rich man," or "Wars are caused by munition-makers" (the latter was popular pseudo-Marxism in the 1930s). We've seen it happen.

One of the troubles in such cases is that, one of these days, such a student of Marxism, who reduces its ABC to such crude determinism, suddenly discovers its inadequacy; thus you get the type of ex-radical who knows all about Marxism—he went through it, didn't he?—and is now convinced that it is obsolete 19th century stuff, etc. A little knowledge is a dangerous thing. Young socialist in particular are not doing themselves justice when they attempt to get along (as socialist) on the basis of smatterings of Marxism picked up here and there in socialist literature. There is no substitute, for the understanding of Marxism as for the understanding of science, for systematic study.

These include shipyards at Bremen and Kiel, factories turning out finished steel and copper goods, a locomotive works, many other companies and "a vast amount of town property." He will also remain the owner of the Gusstahlwerke plant, once the center of his armaments combine.

READING from LEFT to RIGHT

AMERICAN CULTURE AND THE STATE DEPARTMENT, by H. F. Peters.—The American Scholar, Summer 1952.

The core of this article is Professor Peters' relation of his experiences with the State Department as founder and first director of the American Institute at the University of Munich. He explains how the institute was created to bring the study of American art and letters to a European center, to make for greater understanding, etc.

"Such a program was developed and, with the aid of the Rockefeller Foundation, a group of very distinguished American professors invited to Munich. The State Department was, of course, kept informed of these plans. . . . Everything pointed to a successful session. But suddenly, Washington had misgivings about the political views of some of our American professors. Senator McCarthy's charges of disloyalty and subversion had intimidated most officials in the State Department. Their morale was at a low ebb. . . . In the ensuing struggle, the Institute program had to be curtailed. Our students asked questions about academic freedom in America. It was all most unfortunate."

Or again: Professor Peters had arranged for an exhibition of contemporary American paintings in Munich. It was to exhibit all leading American artists, stressing no particular school but presenting a cross-section. The list of artists had been drawn up by "the director of an American art museum, a man respected for his conservative views." Twenty artists were selected to be shown, with five pictures for each. The setup was heartily approved by "the official in charge of exhibitions in Frankfurt" and by German art connoisseurs. Then—

"Imagine our surprise when, a few days later, we received a cable from Washington saying that 'only six names on the list are acceptable to the State Department.' No reasons were given. The exhibition was not held."

Peters goes into some general discussion of the difficulties of working with the State Department. "Finally, there is a tacit understanding that no one who, for whatever reason, might embarrass the Department, must be employed. When the poet T. S. Eliot came to Munich to receive an honorary degree from the university—more than 2000 students and professors crowded the Auditorium Maximum to hear him speak—I was informed that Eliot was persona non grata in Washington because he had served on the board of a selection committee that had awarded a poetry prize to Ezra Pound. . . ."

Understandably, Professor Peters winds up by recommending that efforts like his own be made by private interests only, with the smallest possible connection with the government. It is apparent that in his own mind Peters assimilates his experiences with those of the artists and men of culture under the heel of the Stalinist totalitarianism.

So it's not altogether surprising that Krupp's lawyers have given their wholehearted approval to the Allied plan for decartelizing their client. Meanwhile it's anybody's guess how long before this man—at whose works hundreds of deported workers perished—is once again fully installed as a merchant of death.

—The London Tribune, September 5.

Commenting on the Russian announcement that a congress of the CPSU will be held, the official Titoist propaganda organ *Les Nouvelles Yougoslaves* runs into a delicate problem in tactics. Its article (Sept. 6) begins:

"Stalin has finally called the Congress of the CP of the USSR, twelve and a half years after the preceding one. According to the statutes of the party, and even if one counts out the war years, it should be already the second congress since the end of the war. And yet that has not prevented Stalin from berating our party. . . . for having been late with its own congress. Evidently, it was more important to take a fall out of the CPY than to give an account of his activity, even if only entirely formally, to the members of his own party."

The Yugoslav's answer to the \$64 question—why the Russians are holding their congress at this time—is one that will scarcely occur to anyone else. "And it is not by pure chance, either, that this congress convenes 10 days before the congress of our party. It will be a good occasion to slander us, in the vain hope that this 'higher' forum will, in a way, be able to influence the work of our congress."

Further along, these analysts opine that the reason Stalin is not making the main report is—that he just doesn't have much to say any more.

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WORLD POLITICS

'War Criminal' Krupp Is Getting Along, Thank You

The full, fantastic story of the Allied proposals for "deconcentrating" the Krupp armaments combines has unfolded. The compensation to be received by Alfred Krupp, the head of the family who was sentenced to twelve years imprisonment at Nuremberg for war crimes, will make him, in the words of the *Manchester Guardian* Bonn correspondent, "one of the richest men in Europe."

And, most incredible of all false-according-to the *Manchester Guardian* correspondent) there is nothing to prevent the man who helped Hitler into power from manufacturing arms again. This is the plan approved by the British and American governments and, needless to say, by Herr Krupp von Bohlen and Halbach himself.

Herr Krupp will lose his vested interest in the German steel industry. Compensation: 14 million pounds. He will lose his voting power in the coal-mining industry. In return he will receive a royalty of 2½ per cent on each ton of coal. This will ensure him a steady 830,000 pounds a year. Under similar generous terms he will "surrender" limestone works worth about one million pounds.

Everybody in the family is cared for. Alfred's sister, Baroness Eisenstein, and his nephew, Arnold, will be given joint ownership of the former Krupp holding in the engineering industry. This should keep the wolf from the door, since the holdings are worth about 1½ million pounds.

Brother Bertold, his son Arndt, and another brother Harold, will struggle along with a cash payment of slightly less than one million pounds each. Since there may be some delay in paying this, they are to have a temporary yearly pension of 8300 pounds.

The *Guardian* correspondent reports: "After these many provisions: Herr Alfred Krupp is by no means reduced to the mere status of the holder of one of the biggest cash balances in the history of the world." For a large number of his factories and other interests are to be handed back to him to do with as he pleases.

These include shipyards at Bremen and Kiel, factories turning out finished steel and copper goods, a locomotive works, many other companies and "a vast amount of town property." He will also remain the owner of the Gusstahlwerke plant, once the center of his armaments combine.

You're Another

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PRO AND CON: DISCUSSION

The Problem of European Unity

By DAVID ALEXANDER

LONDON—It is indeed a unique experience for a socialist to hear words like "supra-national authority," "European Assembly" and other such phrases ringing in his ears at this time in history.

True it is that the limited co-operation, both economic and military now occurring in Europe is largely a product of the American demand for greater efficiency in these fields. An American economic system so abhorrent of planning has demanded a degree of planning completely out of consonance with its own political views. It has given the maximum encouragement to the Council of Europe, proposing to abolish customs, tariffs and other barriers between all the countries of continental Europe.

It is my opinion that the results of such a union, whose nucleus would be the Schuman Plan countries, could only be progressive. Whatever barriers to international movement, trade and intercourse are broken down, the system will be changed in a respect which socialists will find to be an advance, if not a specifically socialist one.

Last week, soon after the establishment of the Schuman Plan for the pooling of coal and steel resources of France, Germany, Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg and Italy, a very important move was made. The nine-man "cabinet" was entrusted with the task of creating the conditions for the formation of a supra-national political authority.

The Schuman Plan countries form a part of the Assembly of Europe. They also form part of the American-inspired military European Defense Community. The problem then arose: What would be the relation of a proposed Schuman Plan "High Authority" to the Assembly of Europe—a delegated body—and the Defense Community, in which Britain and Scandinavia were also represented? Many people in Europe felt that unless Britain was prepared to give its blessing—albeit as a non-participant—to the High Authority, it would have no future.

On the one hand, right-wing opinion in Britain has to be associated militarily with Europe, and on the other, it found itself unable to agree to economic union with Europe. The reasons given both by Conservatives and Labor men are somewhat obscure; the best that I have heard is the Labor plea that our Welfare State would be rendered ineffective if other Europeans could make decisions upon it. The real reason appears to me to be that Britain could not stand any of the severe competition in empire markets by Europeans which customs unions would entail. Unfortunately, however, I feel that there is an instinctive antipathy to any arrangement whatsoever which would limit Britain's sovereignty, coupled with a social xenophobia produced by centuries of internecine wars and imperialist competition.

When Anthony Eden last week gave Britain's blessing to the High Authority, he suggested that Britain should continue to send delegates and observers to any supra-national body. This satisfied Europeans in that it not only underlined our interest in their success but also left a door open whereby we could enter at a later date.

The existence of European Assemblies depends upon two factors. One is the American demand for European military organization. The other is the economic troubles of European capitalist countries at this time. They have reached the stage of economic saturation of markets following a war. They concluded that it would be easier to exploit a European market without trade bar-

riers. A population of 140 million is a good potential market. It is ironic that the economic troubles of capitalism should force them to take measures which are anathema to the spirit of capitalism. "Free trade" was once the call of capitalism in its heyday; now it is a different song by the same people, but with the same words.

Is the Strasbourg Bloc "Progressive"?

I think Comrade Alexander is forgetting a number of considerations, when he states so categorically that "the results of such a union. . . could only be progressive."

In the first place, I don't think he should be carried away by the ring of the words "supra-national authority" because they remind one of socialist proposals for a United States of Europe. The steps that are being taken do not add up to that, nor to a West European Federation (let alone an Independent Western Federation). As the N. Y. *Herald Tribune* summarized it this week: "The immediate purpose was to form a European political community with only such supra-national powers as would facilitate the operations of the economic and military groupings now underway or contemplated." To be sure, the *Herald Tribune* adds: "Nevertheless, it could lead to a united Western Europe." That may be as it may, but there is a big difference between the two. And there is no new sign that the nations involved are any more willing to give up essential articles of sovereignty.

Is it MERELY just another economic-military bloc (the formation of which always involves some concessions on "sovereignty" in any case)? No, there are interesting differences, which, as Comrade Alexander rightly says are due to the "economic troubles of capitalism," troubles which add up to an unprecedented decay of the capitalist world. But it has not yet gone outside the essential framework of such a bloc.

That is one thing to keep in mind. Another is the significance of the type of European federation which takes place as a result of "the American demand for European military organization." European federation can realistically take place only if imposed from below or from outside—that is, only on the basis of workers' governments in the countries, or as the imposition of a superior power over satrapies. (That is assuming that the capitalist classes of these countries remain viable enough to continue to rule at all.)

Western Europe can be united under the overlordship of American imperialism. Even this limited economic-military bloc, which is not incompatible with the framework of capitalism, is coming into being partly at least under the pressure of the overlord. I do not think such a union can be considered as "progressive" by socialists.

From a socialist viewpoint, if the Assembly of Europe only succeeds in preparing people psychologically for confederation, it will have achieved something. For capitalists it will go well while all six countries have right-wing governments; the fun will start when socialists take power in any of the "supra-national" countries.

Here, of course, one gets into a discussion of what that term "progressive" means, anyway. I could go into that, but perhaps it will be enough here to remind ourselves of another "progressive" step toward unification. After Hitler came into power, the Nazi regime proceeded to carry out a demand which had long been raised by the socialists: the abolition of the state divisions within Germany and the formation of an entirely unitary government. Was this action of the Nazis "progressive"? Abstractly, formally, considered outside of its real political and social context, one may answer yes—but then that is not saying much. Again: imperialism played the "progressive" role of industrializing and modernizing Japan, but that did not make imperialism "progressive." We suggest these ideas, in lieu of a long discussion of the term, in order to restrain its abstract application to the Strasbourg deals.

I think the British Labor Party is right in turning a cold shoulder to involvement in the Schuman and Strasbourg blocs. Its argument has been that it does not want a socialist Britain (the socialist Britain it proposes to build) under the economic (or military!) control of "an exclusive club dominated by a Christian-Democrat committee," as the *London New Statesman and Nation* put it this past week.

What we have criticized the Laborites for is failing to offer any socialist alternative plan for European unity but for rather using the correct argument to justify what is essentially the same approach as the British Tories. I don't think, myself, that the latter is "obscure." The British interests counterpose their own economic bloc, the sterling bloc, the Commonwealth, to involvement in that of the Continent, and do not wish to see their leading position weakened there. Certainly the xenophobia about which Comrade Alexander speculates is no more virulent in Britain than in the continental countries which have known their share of "internecine wars and imperialist competition."

Yes, indeed, there will be "fun" when socialists take power in any of the "supra-national" countries. We would then see just how supra-national is this bloc, but it will not be the socialists who will enjoy the fun if they then go along with the setup out of attachment to the abstract principle of supra-nationalism.

Hal DRAPER

LABOR ACTION
Independent Socialist Weekly

Vol. 16, No. 39 September 29, 1952

Published weekly by the Labor Action Publishing Company, 114 West 14 Street, New York City 11, N. Y. Send all communications to general editorial and business offices of LABOR ACTION at that address: Telephone: WAtkins 4-4222.
Subscription rate: \$2.00 a year; \$1.00 for six months. (\$2.25 and \$1.15 for Canada and Foreign.) Re-entered as second-class matter May 24, 1940, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1874.

Editor: HAL DRAPER
Assistant Editors: MARY BELL, BEN HALL, GORDON HASKELL
Business Manager: L. G. SMITH

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France in 1952: Capitalism In Decay & the Homeless Left

By SAUL BERG

In France and Italy alone among the nations of Western Europe, the Communist Party remains the dominant force in the labor movement. This situation is a reflection of the continued deepgoing social crisis in these countries, still unresolved seven years after the destruction of war has ceased.

Let us examine the situation of the French worker, so that we can perhaps see why he remains immune to the wooing of the parties that he identifies with the government or, more broadly speaking, with the camp of Western capitalism.

I. Crisis in a Blind Alley

We can refer to Michel Collinet, who has made probably the most thorough study of the French workers' real wages today as compared with 1938 as a base year.* The base year, it may be noted, is not the year in which the French workers lived best, being inferior to 1936-7 and to most of the 1920s.

Nevertheless, in 1951 the real wage, in terms of purchasing power, of the average French worker was still decidedly inferior to that of 1938. Included in this real wage is the very large portion that he receives today not from the employer but from the state, in the form of family allowances and other social benefits. If the workers are divided into categories according to the size of the family, it is found that those with large families are somewhat better off than in 1938, while single men are drastically worse off.

Since Collinet finds that the workers' share of the total national income has declined since 1938, it can be seen that the family allowances do not in any sense represent a social conquest wrested by the workers, but rather a redistribution of income within the working class in a way that tends to divide workers from each other, and that gives those with large families (the *pères lapins*—rabbit fathers—as the left press calls them) more of a vested interest in the status quo.

Even the figures that show a declining workers' share in the national income are inadequate, since they take into consideration only officially reported income. We are familiar with the fact that in the United States the capitalist class, by various dodges, escapes a portion of its tax burden. However, no one has claimed that the total of acknowledged income is not many times that of concealed income.

In France this is not the case. While the workers pay a withholding tax, tax evasion is the accepted thing among the propertied classes, especially among the millions of medium-sized peasant owners. The operation of the taxation system therefore tends toward widening the gap in living standards between classes, rather than reducing the gap sharply as, for example, in Great Britain.

The decline in living standards has taken place against a background of rising industrial production, now about 30 per cent greater than in 1938. Agricultural production, however, has only increased very slightly. Furthermore, a large portion of France's consumer-goods production is exported, while imports have consisted mainly not of consumer goods but of materials needed by heavy industry.

By 1949, when the index of general production had reached 110, the category of consumer-goods production had only reached 104, while producer goods had reached 134. When the export of consumer goods is taken into consideration, it can be seen that the volume of goods available for French consumption has decreased.

Drags on the Economy

Since 1949 the rearmament program has prevented any change in this condition. Marshall Plan aid could not correct this situation, since it also was used primarily to re-equip and expand heavy industry. The French worker has never had the feeling of benefiting personally and tangibly from the Marshall Plan.

Granted that France had the problem of rebuilding industry and agriculture that had been partially destroyed by the war, it nevertheless seems clear that its recovery has not been as complete as that of neighboring countries that suffered at least as much damage, and that the living standard of the working class in particular has lagged by comparison with that of the British workers especially.

Let us examine first the factors that have weighed down the economy as a whole. Perhaps foremost is the endless and paralyzing Indo-China war.

The French government, in 1946 when both Socialists and Stalinists still participated in the cabinet, set out to reconquer its big Asian colony. What Britain gave up reluctantly but peacefully in India and Burma, what the Dutch gave up after a hopeless battle in Indonesia, the French were determined to keep.

After six years, they are as far from their goal as ever. The war has been a constant drain on the French

*Collinet, "La crise des salaires et la structure sociale," in *Lettre aux Militants* (Paris), April 20, 1951.

economy, costing in some years a sum not much smaller than total Marshall Plan aid for the same year.

At the same time the rest of France's colonial empire has been far from peaceful. Revolt in Madagascar and the constant threat of revolt in North Africa have required the maintenance of so large a garrison as to cancel out the fruits of imperialism. While there are private capitalist interests that are making a profit on their operations in Indo-China and Africa, the state and the French economy as a whole bear an enormous loss.

The new strength of native national and social movements has made it impossible for pacification to reach a stage where the empire actually brings benefits to French capitalism. Where once it could be said that the workers in the seats of empire benefited by some crumbs from the profits made in the colonies, today the French workers owe their lowered living standard partially to the hopeless attempt to stem the tide of Asian and African nationalism.

Now there has been added to the shooting war in Indo-China and the garrisoning of the rest of the empire the tremendous burden of rearmament in partnership with the other Atlantic Pact nations. Rearmament entered the scene when the job of replacing productive capacity destroyed by the war was just about completed.

The workers feel like the dog that never gets to catch the mechanical rabbit. First they had to postpone their demands on the plea that capital had to be quickly accumulated in order to replace the destroyed industrial plant. Now they are told that the increased production of goods still cannot be used to raise their living standards because steel, transport and munitions have to be expanded to far higher levels.

Dead Weight

Supplementing colonial wars and rearmament is a third drag on the economy that can be broadly defined as parasitic. The French simply have too great a proportion of the population devoted to non-productive and basically unnecessary tasks. As compared with the pre-war period the percentage of the population consisting of shopkeepers and civil-service employees has increased enormously.

Just after the liberation, when conditions were especially miserable, the black market as a way of earning a living was infinitely superior to work in a factory. The black market gradually disappeared, but the lot of the wage worker remained so atrocious that it was still more attractive to engage in trade on an insignificant level, depending on a very high profit with a tiny turnover to eke out an existence for one's family.

Thus, in 1946 when there were many black-market transactions, the volume of legal business transactions was 24 per cent greater than in 1938, even though the volume of available goods was much smaller. From 1931 to 1950, while the index of production workers decreased from 114 to 110 (with 1901 as the base year of 100), the index of people engaged in commerce and administration rose from 132 to 160!

The increase in the percentage of the population devoted to "service" is a phenomenon characteristic of the United States also, but it is more supportable and even to some extent more necessary in the American economy, where the volume of available consumer goods has actually risen since before the war. In France, where such goods must be exported to get capital for rearmament, the existence of millions of inefficient and largely idle small traders and shop-keepers is a crushing burden on the workers.

In view of the application of government controls to the economy after the war, together with the nationalization of some industries, the roster of government employees necessarily increased. But in addition to the necessary increase there were increases of no benefit to the worker. There was the expansion of personnel needed to administer all the indirect forms of wage payment, such as the family allowances, which, as we have seen, merely transferred the source of payment to the state, without increasing the workers' share.

More serious is the maintenance by the government of the so-called Republican security troops, much larger and more mechanized than the old *Garde Mobile*. This force, presumably formed to defend the state against a Stalinist coup, has been used to break many strikes called by non-Stalinist unions. Anyone who has seen the security troops roll into the cities, for example, during a 24-hour general strike called by Force Ouvrière, has seen a deployment of force against labor unparalleled by anything seen in Britain or the United States in many years.

Pinay's Majority

Having taken a quick look at the material condition of the workers and the state of the economy, let us examine the situation of the current Pinay government. Considerable publicity has been given in the United States to Premier Antoine Pinay, who is depicted as the kind of sober, honest, determined businessman France has needed ever since the war to restore confidence in the currency, balance the budget, and thereby finally induce all the hoarders of gold (in a country traditionally full of hoarders) to plow their gold into useful investments that will save the French economy.

Pinay's cabinet is the first one in France since the war to espouse openly an economic policy of *liberalisme* (economic liberty for the businessman) instead of *dirigisme* (state-managed economy). It is also the first cabinet since the war to enjoy neither outright ministerial participation nor voting support in the legislature from the Socialist Party.

This cabinet is the product of legislative elections that

resulted in the present hexagonal Chamber of Deputies, so called because it is divided nearly equally between six major parties—Gaullists, Independents, Radicals, Popular Republicans (Catholics), Socialists and Stalinists. Pinay's own party, the Independents, can be loosely compared to the Republican Party in the United States, being led by industrialists and big farmers.

The followers of De Gaulle differ from this conservative grouping by being more nationalistic and (though by no means a full-fledged fascist movement) more authoritarian, calling for a strong executive, the liquidation of class conflict by a plan for capital-labor association that smacks of Mussolini's corporative state, etc. The Radicals—despite their name almost as conservative in economic policy as the Independents—differ from the latter in having the remnants of an old anti-Catholic tradition. The Popular Republicans are a heterogeneous party of Catholic democrats, ranging all the way from a right wing very close to the Independents to a left wing based on the Catholic trade unions.

The Pinay majority, based on the Independents, the Radicals and the Popular Republicans, was at first very shaky, especially since there was an incessant conflict within the latter party as to whether to support so conservative a government. But so attractive a lure was the accession to power of an old-fashioned "free enterprise" conservative that 30 of the Gaullist deputies could not resist, and split away to support Pinay, thereby giving him perhaps the most stable majority France has seen since the war.

From the standpoint of stabilizing French capitalist economy, it may well be that Pinay can do a better job than previous French governments. Either private capital in France must be expropriated by a workers' government and used for the good of society, or else it must be encouraged to come out of hiding and perform its customary economic functions. Pinay seems to have done the latter quite effectively.

From Crisis to Crisis

But the joker is that even bourgeois analysts agree that his success in raising funds, through a tax amnesty on arrears and through gold-backed bond issues, still cannot eliminate the government's crushing deficit, but merely decreases it. In short the problems of the French economy cannot be solved because the fundamental political aims of the government continue to impose on it too crushing a burden—rearmament and colonial wars.

There is a minority of bourgeois opinion that proposes to change this state of affairs. Pierre Mendes-France has proposed withdrawal from Indo-China. The influential newspaper *Le Monde* proposes a drastic reduction in the scale of rearmament.

It seems impossible, however, for this viewpoint to become dominant. Two years ago sentiment in bourgeois circles for some kind of Indo-China settlement was growing, but since the Korean conflict the U. S. has begun to aid the French in Indo-China and a colonial war has been transformed into another front of the world struggle between the two power blocs. Under these circumstances, continuation of the Indo-China war becomes not just a gamble for future colonial profits but a military obligation to the Western imperialist bloc as a whole.

Of course, the answer to this could be withdrawal from the bloc and the adoption of a policy of neutrality. Rearmament would cease, but so would Marshall Plan aid. Even so, France might be a little better off economically, but at a genuine cost to her security. For if opposing Stalinism by military containment has its weaknesses, it nevertheless remains certain that the alternative method of undermining Stalinism politically by attracting the masses with a bold social program is a method totally excluded for capitalist France. Only a socialist France or a socialist Western Europe could do this.

The Pinay government, then, can be expected to stagger from crisis to crisis, bargaining with its American ally for better terms, pleading with French capitalists to shore up the government's finances, and certainly without any possibility of changing the miserable situation of the French workers.

II. Socialists Seek a Road

Let us now glance at the condition of the French workers' movement. The general picture is one of bitter but passive opposition to the status quo, passive because of disillusionment with the existing organizations claiming to lead the working class.

The unions remain at their lowest level of membership since the liberation. In 1946 the largest labor federation, the CGT, with a Stalinist majority and reformist and revolutionary minorities within it, had six million members, while the Catholic unions had another million. Since then the unions have splintered into many competing organizations, whose total membership is about three million.

The CGT, openly and thoroughly Stalinized, has a little over half, while most of the rest are divided between the Catholic unions and the reformist-led Force Ouvrière. One important union, the teachers, with 150,000 members, has remained united by withdrawing from affiliation with any confederation. There is a scattering

of other unions that have gone "autonomous" like the teachers, and; to complete the picture with the two extremes, a small reactionary Confederation of Independent Unions and the small anarcho-syndicalist CNT.

The workers' disillusionment is, of course, soundly based. In 1946-7, with the Socialists and Stalinists sitting in the cabinet, the trade-union leaders told the workers to produce first, and that gains in living standards would come later. The Stalinists denounced strike action as reactionary.

Although, during these years, rank-and-file opposition movements made serious headway, the Stalinist turn to the "left" as the cold war sharpened ripped these movements in the bud. From opposing all strike action the Stalinists went over to the notorious "Molotov" strikes, where the aim of the strike was apparently more to wreck the productive apparatus than to gain any economic objectives.

The abject leaders of Force Ouvrière and the Catholic unions, however, instead of offering a sincere day-to-day defense of the workers' interests as an alternative to the new Stalinist adventurism, played the role of apologists for the government, in which the Catholics and Socialists still sat. Strike action for pay increases was denounced as inflationary, and the workers were told to put their faith in the government's campaign to reduce prices. As prices continued to rise, the prestige of Force Ouvrière fell.

Today, Force Ouvrière, despite some aid at the top from the American labor movement, remains a tiny minority in the industrial plants with a few local exceptions. The CGT has only half of the total French trade-union membership, but it has two-thirds of the union members in industry, while in the white-collar fields the Catholics and Force Ouvrière together have a substantial majority.

The full measure of F. O.'s ineffectiveness can only be realized when one keeps in mind the fact that the CGT has done nothing for the workers but lead them into useless adventures and political demonstrations. Yet, because they feel that the CGT is the only union that is militantly opposed to the employers, the majority of workers continue to vote for it in factory committee elections.

As one CIO representative in Europe exclaimed about Force Ouvrière in an unguarded moment, "For Christ's sake, don't these guys realize that there are times when you have to fight the boss?"

Three-Way Division

The question arises as to what has become of the rank-and-file opposition movement that as far back as 1946 mustered delegates representing hundreds of thousands of members at the CGT congress. Some of the oppositionists, motivated in their opposition merely by Stalinophobia and the desire to build an independent base for themselves, dropped any pretense at a militant policy as soon as the Stalinists turned toward super-militancy. In the main, however, the opposition has stagnated not because of turncoats and opportunists but because of its inability to unite in strategy and tactics despite a fundamentally common approach of class-struggle unionism, not subordinated to any government or party.

The opposition has divided between three different approaches:

(1) Activity in the CGT because the mass of the industrial workers, including the most militant, are still to be found in its ranks.

(2) Activity in the free unions, Catholic or Force Ouvrière, as the only substantial organizations in which free expression is tolerated.

(3) The building of new unions untainted by the miserable record of the old ones. This approach is exemplified by the autonomous unions, and also, in its own sectarian way, by the CNT.

The first approach has been that of the orthodox Trotskyists, and if ever a group exhausted all possible experience this was the instance; because, one by one, over a period of five years, their militants have been expelled from the CGT until almost none remained. Nevertheless, mesmerized by their pro-Stalinist theoretical position, they remain impervious to experience and firmly anchored to the idea of work in the CGT.

However, there is some hope to be found in the recent expulsion of most of the French Trotskyists from the Fourth International for unwillingness to go all the way in accepting the International leadership's most recent pro-Stalinist evolution. Freed from this dead hand, the former French section, which contains a number of militant industrial workers, may change its orientation in daily trade-union activity a good deal more quickly than it is able to drop its paralyzing theoretical baggage.

Efforts for Unity

Other left groups, such as the anarchists, the syndicalists grouped around the magazine *Revolutions Proletarienne*, and scattered groups of left-socialists, are active either in Force Ouvrière or in autonomous unions. They constitute a very substantial opposition in F. O., though certainly not in any position to wrest leadership from the reformists.

Their chief obstacle is that F. O.'s general reputation among the workers is so low that the union does not attract most of the militant workers who would be the natural supporters of the opposition. Class-conscious mil-

itants who lead local autonomous unions are not necessarily sectarian in refusing to join F. O., because in many cases they would lose their following in the plants if they tried to make a switch.

The opposition, therefore, seems doomed in the immediate future to remain divided, although efforts to unite its forces continue along two lines:

(1) Liaison and cooperation in each region of all opposition militants regardless of union affiliation.

(2) Unification of Force Ouvrière and the autonomous unions, not by the former swallowing the latter individually but by a fusion congress that would bring into F. O. at one time enough autonomous unions so that the latter would be convinced that the present character of F. O. would be at least partially modified as a result.

Meanwhile the splintering of the trade-union movement has contributed to the demoralization and apathy of the working class. There is no such thing as a union shop, or even an exclusive bargaining agent, in French industry. In each plant three or more unions exist side by side, and, as a result, solidarity in daily struggles is extremely difficult to obtain. The unification of the French free labor movement and the development of cadres of militants within it remain therefore crucial tasks in rebuilding the confidence and the fighting capacity of the French masses.

Linked up with the reconstruction of the trade-union movement is the problem of rebuilding the workers' political movement. Here the central problem is the dominant position of Stalinism and the vacuum created by the complete decrepitude of the Socialist Party.

The Socialist Party

Independent socialists maintain that only a dynamic program of social change based on relentless class struggle can provide the working masses with an alternative to Stalinism. But although this is true in the long run, it would be false to deny that where the social-democracy maintains its defense of the workers' daily interests, inadequate as its program and methods may be, the very attachment of the workers to their institutions and traditions, in short their organizational conservatism, together with the repellent features of the Stalinist movement that the workers encounter, may ensure the ability of the social-democracy for a time to maintain its control over the majority of the workers.

This was, in fact, the case in all the countries of Western Europe except France and Italy after World War II. In all the Benelux and Scandinavian countries the Stalinists reached new peaks of strength in 1945-6, but these peaks left them still a minority in the labor movement. Since then they have declined in all these countries although remaining stronger than they were before the war. Only in Western Germany are they actually weaker than before Hitler, undoubtedly because of the direct experience of millions of Germans with Russian army occupation at the close of the war.

In France, however, the Stalinists had already gained the support of the majority of industrial workers before World War II. Their superior organization and more numerous cadres in the Resistance enabled them to emerge in 1945 as the unchallenged political leaders of the working class.

The shift away from the Socialist Party was so great that that party became qualitatively different in social composition from the social-democratic parties of other countries. The overwhelming majority of Socialist Party members and voters now consists of middle-class elements and white-collar workers. Teachers, lawyers, civil-service employees, peasants in regions with an anti-Catholic tradition, these make up the party ranks. Only in a few areas does the party still retain strong links with the workers, and even in these it has less working-class support than the Stalinists.

The RDR Episode

Under these circumstances the aim of left socialists to rebuild an authentic socialist movement by patient work within the broad stream of the social-democracy meets new difficulties. We have described the problem faced by militants who seek to make Force Ouvrière a militant trade-union center. Yet it is a fact that even members of Force Ouvrière are often careful to dissociate their union from any connection with the Socialist Party!

This does not mean that there is no possibility whatever to do useful work in the Socialist Party, but the prospect has been sufficiently gloomy so that the dominant trend over the past six years has been for left socialists to break away from the party, rather than to enter it. Nevertheless there is a small group in the party, headed by J. Riés and L. Weitz, that stands for a third-camp policy and criticizes the generally opportunist policy of the party.

The phenomenon of a political vacuum, created by the social-democracy's failure to perform even its usual function, has been noticed by many bourgeois observers, who have come to speak of France's homeless left. And it is a fact that, despite the absence of any large left socialist organization, this homeless left is a phenomenon of sizable proportions.

The most impressive attempt to organize this left was the RDR (the Rassemblement Démocratique Révolutionnaire) organized in 1948, whose founding manifesto denounced reformism and Stalinism and emphasized the combination of revolutionary social change and democracy as its basis. The RDR made an impression because

it had the support of a number of prominent intellectuals, particularly David Rousset and Jean-Paul Sartre, and also the support of the editors of *Franc-Tireur*, a daily which originated in the Resistance and now had a larger circulation among the workers of the Paris region than the Stalinist *L'Humanité*.

The "leading personalities" with which the RDR national committee was afflicted were not the type, however, to build an organization; and although some left socialists, together with former Trotskyists who had moved to a third-camp position, became active in the RDR, the organization never enrolled more than a small fraction of the "homeless left." Nevertheless it created a considerable stir, and might have been able to consolidate its organization if a number of its leaders had not moved toward a position of support of the Atlantic bloc. These leaders, Rousset and the editors of *Franc-Tireur*, had had a semi-Stalinist position until the shock of the Czech coup, and evidently their ephemeral desire to build a third-camp movement was just a transitional phase in the voyage from critical support of one big power bloc to critical support of the other.

The rank and file of the RDR, hostile to this shift of policy, was nonetheless too loosely organized and too unsure of itself to react vigorously, and the organization simply collapsed. In some localities isolated groups of left socialists continued to carry on activity.

New Attempt

Two years later a new group of "personalities" including some of those who had held fast to a third-camp position in the RDR, set up an organization called the Independent Left. At that time an article in *LABOR ACTION* pointed out the valuable role this group could play if it were serious about building a movement and not merely interested in creating a temporary label for the purpose of presenting a list of candidates in the forthcoming legislative elections. Unfortunately the latter proved to be the case.

The candidates of the Independent Left probably expected to make a good showing merely on the basis that they were well-known individuals standing on a third-camp platform. But their failure to build an organization of active militants resulted in their polling merely a few thousand votes in each sector of the Paris region, a vote no larger than that polled by the Trotskyists as well as by a "Titoist" list.

Since the election the organization has survived as the "Action Center of the Independent Left," whose only function is to call an occasional mass meeting, such as the one it sponsored recently in Paris protesting the new wave of repression in Franco Spain.

After these years of disorganization it can now be reported that the scattered groups of independent socialists in France have grouped themselves around a monthly national organ, *Démocratie Proletarienne*, six issues of which have already appeared, and plan a national conference in a few months. Probably this group's proudest boast, after the bitter experiences of recent years, is that it is not an "array of personalities" but an organization of rank-and-file militants.

The group's aim is similar to one tentatively put forward by Fred Zeller in *Vérité* way back in 1947, just a few months before the beginning of the RDR experience. This was the idea of building a broad workers' party, as contrasted with the idea of building a tightly disciplined revolutionary party based on a thoroughly formulated theoretical program. Thus, though the line of *Démocratie Proletarienne* is clearly a revolutionary socialist one, its aim will be to rally all workers dissatisfied with the failure of reformism and Stalinism to defend their basic class interests, and to aid and encourage all attempts to regroup these workers, without any rigid doctrinal conditions for such regroupment. There can be no doubt that these rank-and-file militants are serious, unlike some of their predecessors. Let us hope that they will be successful.

London Letter

The British Co-op Party On Labor Nationalization

By DAVID ALEXANDER

LONDON, Sept. 17.—The cooperative movement in Britain has 11 million members and does \$1,700 million in trade a year. This week an important split occurred between its political arm, the Cooperative Party, and its businessmen.

The former want to extend public control in industry, and suggest various methods of doing this—partnership, co-ownership, municipal ownership. They are prepared; should nationalization policies require it, to accept public control themselves.

The businessmen of the cooperative movement are worried about the "dividend" they pay. They are afraid that proposed public control will cause them to decrease in membership.

An open split occurred this week, and the Cooperative Party has launched an all-out attack in support of its view. The party is affiliated with the Labor Party.

Readers of Labor Action Take the Floor . . .

Discussion: On Labor-Fair Deal Relations

To the Editor:

Many advocates of an American labor party came away from the news of the Democratic convention impressed both by the unmistakable presence of a clear-cut labor faction and by the delegate strength of the AFL-CIO-ADA-NAACP bloc. That this left wing challenged the Southern reactionary forces, even threatening to take control of the party—at least on the first day of the convention—was more than notable. The sixteen-year coalition of heterogeneous and diverse elements held together by Roosevelt and Truman tended to fly apart. Immediate questions came to mind: what is the relationship of the growth of this labor-liberal bloc to the development of a labor party in America, and what is the task of labor party supporters vis-à-vis that bloc?

LABOR ACTION perhaps posed the same questions, although in looser and more general form, when Gordon Haskell asked: "what do the events of this convention reveal about the relationship of the labor movement to the Democratic Party, and hence about the role which the American working class is playing and is going to play in American politics for the period just ahead?" But five weeks have passed and the columns of LABOR ACTION have borne no reply. An abundance of articles unmasking Stevenson and Sparkman has appeared. Within limitations these have pertinence; however, problems dealing with the direction of movement and the significance of growth of the Democratic left, particularly as they relate to the labor party perspective, cry out for solution.

Haskell may have thought he came up with answers to his questions by contending that: (1) a rightward drift in the Democratic Party continues despite its "most radically formulated platform" and its "straight Fair Deal" campaign, and (2) the close integration of labor to the Democratic Party "permitted the big machines . . .

to turn their backs on the labor leadership." But his reply is addressed to another matter entirely. Actually he was trying to answer why the labor-liberal bloc in the Democratic Party was defeated at Chicago. By implication, of course, he could have meant that the defeat of the bloc at the convention foreshadowed doom for such a left wing growth within the Democratic Party, and that the evidence finally points only to a labor party development outside the Democratic Party. In that case the affirmation should be taken out of the realm of implication and openly stated. Also in that case LABOR ACTION is confronted with the task of explaining how the AFL endorsement of a presidential candidate—for the first time since 1924—can be on the one hand "progressive" and on the other directed away from a labor party course.

Obviously it is easier to pose questions of this kind than to answer them. But what is paramount is that such questions cannot be sloughed off, if a positive orientation toward a living labor party is to be maintained. At any rate, it appears that LABOR ACTION, as a result of the events at the Democratic convention and afterward, should be impelled into a reconsideration of its support to labor candidates in Democratic primaries running against reactionary machine politicians (as in the Wiloughby Abner case), and perhaps even to extend this support to all primaries where the Democratic labor-liberal bloc confronts the right wing for control of the party. Moreover, it is becoming apparent that a full analysis of the course of American labor in politics will have to take into consideration the relevancy of the history of the Labor Party in Britain where the labor party movement first operated through one of the capitalist parties before assuming an independent role.

R. MAGNUS
S. BEILAS

Comment: Socialist Policy and a Labor Party

As Comrades Beilas and Magnus note in their second paragraph (with a "perhaps" that we don't quite get), articles in LABOR ACTION have posed the same questions that they do. These are basically the same as those which every election campaign in recent times has posed for us: What does it all mean with regard to the perspectives for a labor-party development? What is, and what should be, the relation between labor and the Fair Deal?

LABOR ACTION has tried to say as much about this as is possible on the basis of developments as they occur, in addition to reiterating the general line of policy which we advocate: a break with the Democratic Party and the Fair Deal machine, and the formation by labor of its own independent party. We have also shown why, in our view, the current election situation bears out the validity of this policy.

If there is anything more that can be said along these lines (and no doubt there is), our columns are always open for articles, discussion pieces or letters by anyone who thinks he can do so. For example, if Beilas or Magnus had a different angle or interpretation of the election campaign, or recommendations on policy that we have not covered, they would be urged to present these for the interest of our readers.

We do not agree with our correspondents that our articles "have borne no reply" to the question raised. Their letter itself refers to part of the analysis we have presented. We do not understand from their letter precisely why this constitutes "no reply."

Our articles "unmasking" the Democratic candidates (as well as the Eisenhower candidacy) have sought to show why labor should not support these candidates. Among the things we do not understand from the letter is why this has pertinence only "within limitations," unless this merely means that there are other questions to discuss also.

Our analysis of the Democratic convention sought to show that labor helped the Fair Deal turn to the right, by its own role and by the fact that it has "nowhere else to go." The more "loyally" the labor leaders commit themselves to the Democrats, the more the Democrats feel they can afford to spend their energies wooing right-wing elements. Our proposal is that labor break with the self-defeating policy and form its own party.

This, say Beilas and Magnus, "is addressed to another matter entirely." In that case we aren't entirely sure what matter is uppermost in the minds of our correspondents.

THE BRITISH EXPERIENCE

The following comments may or may not come to grips with the questions in their minds. If they do not, the two comrades can always ask their questions again and more clearly.

Take first the reference to the history of the British Labor Party. Beilas and Magnus merely say one should "take [this] into consideration." This is not too helpful in itself since taking the British experience into consideration has been standard operating procedure in American socialist discussions of the labor party question.

Taking it into consideration right now, if only briefly, we find that the British labor movement first adopted a political role by operating through one of the capitalist parties, the Liberal Party (the "lib-lab period"). It formed the Labor Representation Committee to do so. This, we see, is similar to the step taken by the CIO when it formed its Political Action Committee to operate primarily in the Democratic Party, and when the AFL formed its Labor League for Political Education.

This, both in Britain and in America, was a progressive step. It was progressive, in its context, because it

meant that for the first time the labor movement was organizing its forces as a class to intervene in political action. It was only a step because this class organization was being directed to support capitalist candidates.

In this way, however, British labor—having taken a step toward political organization as a class—went through those disillusioning experiences in the course of supporting capitalist candidates which eventually led it on the road of independent party organization and action.

This process, however, was not simply an automatic one. The ability of the British labor movement to draw conclusions from its lib-lab experience was immeasurably fostered by the activity of its socialist wing in opposing the lib-lab policy. From the beginning, the latter warned in advance against its consequences; pointed out these consequences as they unfolded; "unmasked" (as Beilas and Magnus would say) the Liberal Party politicians; drew the conclusions of experience as they occurred and hammered their lessons home; showed how the Liberals yielded to or ignored labor's needs insofar as the latter exhibited independence or merely acted as a tail to the Liberal kite; and finally were successful in helping to bring about a break with the Liberal Party and the independent formation of the Labor Party, though not overnight and not without some vacillation.

ABOUT "PROGRESSIVE" STEPS

Thus the British Labor Party-to-be in a real sense incubated (or, if you wish, tried out its wings) within the framework of Liberal Party politics, constantly pushed by the socialist wing to assert its class independence. This is the context for our statement that the initial formation of the Labor Representation Committee was a "progressive step" (as compared with the previous stage of no political action by labor) and that the socialists sought to push this step forward by opposing the lib-lab policy of the Labor Representation Committee.

This is the attitude, broadly speaking, that we have taken toward the CIO-PAC, and we have explained it many times over some years. This is the attitude which we patiently explained, all over again, with reference to the AFL decision to endorse a candidate this year, thereby breaking with its policy of hands-off in the national election. (We also said the necessary things about the fact that the AFL was taking this plunge into national elections behind a capitalist candidate, Stevenson.)

We wonder whether Beilas and Magnus understand the British experience—which they recommend be taken into consideration—when they ask how the AFL move "can be on the one hand 'progressive' and on the other directed away from a labor party course." A stranger to American politics might gather from their remark that the AFL was really moving "away from a labor party course" in endorsing Stevenson! We venture to say this is the clearest indication of confused thinking in their letter.

They forget the all-important matter of DIRECTION of development. The AFL has NOT been on a labor party course, and it is NOT moving "away from a labor party course" to make its endorsement of the capitalist candidate. Its course in national elections has been a continuation of Gompersism, and that is what it is moving away from.

ROLE OF SOCIALISTS

The duty of socialists is to applaud the fact that the AFL recognizes the necessity for labor to participate in national politics, and to criticize its policy of implementing its political action through supporting capitalist candidates.

There is an alternative kind of policy, of course, and it is one which we reject. It is not a socialist policy, in our view, but one in which socialists themselves would be yielding to the political backwardness of the labor movement.

This kind of policy reasons roughly as follows: Since labor "must" go through the experience of supporting the lib-labs, therefore we (the socialists) should urge the labor movement to support the Fair Deal. If labor is at present still at the stage where it supports capitalist candidates, then we too should support capitalist candidates of the same stripe. If labor is still in the process of getting deep into the Democratic Party, then we should advocate that they get still deeper.

Perhaps the intention is to get their process of disillusionment over with all the more quickly, or something like that, but this approach ignores the specific SOCIALIST role in warning the labor movement in advance and of drawing the lessons of independence of every stage, as a vanguard which "represents the future of the working class in the present." It is also, perhaps, a very mechanical conclusion that the American development "must" duplicate the British in every detail. But there is no inevitability about the precise course which the American labor movement will take in its own road to independent labor party action.

NEW PROPOSAL?

This, of course, only touches on the argumentation which we have gone into on this question on other occasions, but it points up a difference. It is partly in this connection that the Independent Socialist League, at its last convention, rejected the policy of supporting "labor candidates" in Democratic primaries (as in the Wiloughby Abner case). At any rate, Beilas and Magnus go a good deal beyond even the Abner-type of case when they suggest that we "extend" such support to all Fair Dealers arrayed against Democratic right-wingers in the party primaries. We are quite sure, for one thing, that this suggested policy could not possibly be limited to Democratic primaries, and would even question whether Beilas and Magnus think it could. We are also quite sure that such a policy would mean the abandonment of socialist class politics, and does not differ essentially from adopting the CIO's politics as our own.

We do not know in what sense the two comrades propose that such a policy requires "consideration" by us; nor whether they tend to look on it with some favor themselves. We do know that this policy is essentially the one we have been "considering" for some years, every time (in fact) that we criticize the labor leaders for following it! There is no other single question to which we have given more "consideration." In the light of this, the apparent belief of Beilas and Magnus that they are suggesting something really new, to which we "have borne no reply" is a bit puzzling. It lends color to the possibility that we quite misunderstand them.

AN "AFFIRMATION"

Beilas and Magnus also seem to demand that LABOR ACTION give its "affirmation" on whether or not the lib-lab bloc in the Democratic Party faces "doom" and whether "the evidence finally points only to a labor party development outside the Democratic Party." If the operative word is "finally," then—yes, indeed, we have often expressed our confidence that the American labor movement will have to form its own independent labor party outside the Democratic Party. But it is also not at all useless to discuss or speculate on the exact course of events and experiences which will lead labor to this conclusion. In 1948, for example, when several labor leaders were openly talking of a break, one line of possibility was more prominent than it is at the moment; it is still not excluded. As of now, discussion on this question will obviously be different depending on whether Eisenhower or Stevenson is elected in November. Perhaps Beilas and Magnus are demanding this kind of predictive semi-speculation; it has its place, as we said, even though we must be careful not to confuse the principles of Marxism with a crystal ball.

In any case, no one can demand that LABOR ACTION have a "line" on this. Our "line" is the direction which we point for labor on the way OUT OF the political and social blind alley it is in; there are plenty of opponents of the labor-party idea who are busily pointing the way INTO the Democratic Party. For socialists to add to these efforts would be to carry coal to Newcastle—while at the same time declaring that the coal doesn't belong there in the first place.

If these comments do not strike Beilas and Magnus as bearing on their letter (we can't tell), they are at least very important for socialists to keep in mind—in order to avoid, at one and the same time, the mistake of failing to see the positive side of labor political developments and spinning the whole business as simply a reformist mess, and, on the other hand, the mistake of ourselves yielding the vanguard role in order to "go along" with official labor policy at all costs.—Ed.

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