

# Labor Age

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AN EDITORIAL



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*a monthly of social critique*

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**JAMES RORTY**  
**DAVID J. SAPOSS**

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**THE PROGRESSIVE, Dept. B., Madison Wis**

**B**LACK clouds shot through with flame hang over the sky as the new year approaches. They are the clouds of war.

## Happy New Year

France and Belgium have defaulted, at least temporarily, on the installment of the war debts due the United States on December 15. On the one hand, that means a bitter feeling between France and the United States. On the other hand, France which has made respect for the letter of the contract in the Versailles Treaty the basis of her whole policy toward Germany since the war, is now herself in the position of having broken the letter of a contract. Even though she is able to put up a plausible argument that it was the Hoover moratorium last year which sounded the death-knell of the reparations and war debts structure, and that she is only following out the logical consequences of that step in declaring a moratorium so far as her own payments to the U. S. are concerned, the fact is that she has refused to pay a debt which the other party to the contract believes is due. All international agreements and treaties have thus been rendered shaky. What in particular is France to say now if Germany asserts that willy-nilly she is going to build her military force up to the point of equality with France? What would that mean for the peace of Europe?

Feeling is tense in Italy over anti-Italian demonstrations in Yugoslavia and vice-versa. Japan flatly refuses to listen to League of Nations' protests about its virtual seizure of a large part of Manchuria last year. In fact, disquieting reports come from the East to the effect that she is now planning to add a large part of North China to her Manchurian sphere of influence and unite the whole into an empire under the deposed Chinese emperor Pu Yi.

Soviet Russia, which played an apparently conciliatory role toward Japan in Manchuria until recently, has now come out with the announcement that she has renewed her old alliance with China, and the Kuo Ming government in China at the same time comes out in more militant fashion against Japan. Japan says that news of the Soviet-Chinese alliance came "like a thunder clap."

The disarmament conference is completely shelved for the present, having adjourned after passing a nearly meaningless resolution to the effect that Germany's right to equality in arms to be recognized presently, but in a world where security is provided for all! Swell chance.

The economic conference which has been talked about for months should be held soon if distress in Europe is not to bring on one or more fresh crashes there, but under the circumstances we have sketched how can the powers sit down around the table and help each other plan to restore prosperity? Swell chance number two. They may yet choose war as the simplest way out of the dilemma.

The developments to which we have pointed suggest that if such a war came the opposing sides might display some strange partners, with France, Belgium, Poland, Rumania, Yugoslavia, Japan arraigned on one side, and England, Italy, Germany, China, Soviet Russia and the U. S. A. on the other!

The workers of the world must enter upon the new year determined to resist war, determined if any government

resorts to war to overthrow that government and establish in its place a workers' republic dedicated to peace, justice and brotherhood.



**A**T long last has Sam Kaplan, czar of Local 306 of the Motion Picture Operators' Union, been removed from control of that body by action of the international union.

## Fall of Kaplan And Commerford

President William Elliot states that the act was for the "good of the organization." Harassed dissenting members of Local 306 are re-instated into jobs which were taken from them under the Kaplan regime. Reforms promised by the international union in the basic conduct of the union are still lagging. It is squarely up to the International to do a thorough job, in order that the Kaplans may not wriggle back into power in the local.

The CPLA can congratulate itself on the outcome of this fight. It carried on when others drew back for fear of the political power of Kaplan. To the Scripps-Howard paper, the *New York World-Telegram*, also goes great credit for the ouster.

On November 21, in answer to the CPLA "Bill of Particulars" on the racketeering, gangster and reactionary evils in A. F. of L. unions, President Green issued a statement that racketeering had been wiped out in the American Federation of Labor. Appearing first in the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, this statement has been re-printed in a considerable section of the labor press.

We wish that the statement were true. But right on its heels comes the conviction of Patrick J. Commerford, "supervisor" for the International Union of Operating and Hoisting Engineers in New York, for income tax evasion. Testimony in the trial revealed that Commerford had received thousands of dollars for breaking strikes and allowing the employment of non-union men on union jobs. He admitted that he had accepted such monies, but averred that they were merely good-will "gifts" from the contractors!

The CPLA has demanded the suspension of the international union, until its president can be removed and the international re-organized. Commerford owed his great power to the international president, who supported him against the membership of the local in New York at every turn. President Green has clearly a duty to perform here, particularly since he announced some months ago that the A. F. of L. would suspend any international union harboring racketeering elements in its midst.



**M**ANY liberals and even some radicals have been inclined to think that there was still some democracy in the United States and that those who insisted that a

## The Bankers Dictate

dictatorship of the bankers already existed were a little balm and easily alarmed. Well, last week the police, firemen and teachers of New York City had their pay cut, a temporary cut supposedly, but without any definite limit as to the time for which it is to obtain.

Not a single newspaper, however conservative, made the

slightest effort to conceal the fact that this pay cut was made at the command of the bankers who would not lend New York City any money, not even for the relief of the jobless, unless this wage reduction was effected. The bankers took this position, although the representatives of the teaches in particular pointed out that other reforms could be made in the city government which would effect much greater savings than the salary reduction.

At one point in the proceedings, after the teachers had been forced to abandon their demand that the reduction should hold for not more than two years, a four year limit was suggested to Governor Roosevelt. The governor of the Empire State and the president-elect of the great United States of America then telephoned to the New York bankers, and the bankers said "nothing doing" and insisted that the pay cut must be for an indefinite period. The governor of New York State and the president-elect of the U. S. A. then yielded to the bankers.

We are told that there is a lot of indignation among the teachers against Tammany politicians who, they feel, abandoned them at the last minute in their salary fight. We trust that those who are supposed to be teaching the youth of the nation will have intelligence enough to look below the surface and not to commit the error of thinking that they will accomplish something if they drive out the Tammany politicians and put in their stead a Republican or so-called non-partisan administration equally under the control of the bankers.

Let the teachers as well as police and firemen join with their fellow workers to smash the dictatorship of the bankers, the existence of which has been so clearly and brutally revealed to them in the last few weeks.



**S**HORT, quick strikes have characterized labor action in the South this past year. They have been attended by some success, and have given a hint as to the way of industrial protest in the depression period.

### Lessons of Paterson Stoppage Success

Paterson silk workers tried a similar experiment two months ago. There was then an upturn in the silk business. No one knew how long it would last. The union was without funds for a general walk-out. There was little prospect of large money raising for relief. And yet, the wages and conditions were disgustingly poor.

The Paterson branch of the CPLA hit upon the bosses while silk was on the looms. The workers need not even walk out. If they would stop and get something, then they might return to their looms.

A survey just completed now shows that 90 per cent of the workers were benefited by this stoppage movement. Thousands were benefited who did not even have to leave their shops. On the even of the stoppage announcement, the bosses rushed to raise wages and remedy some other bad conditions.

The movement, it is now seen, might have won more results for the workers but for sabotaging by certain reactionary elements which seem to be connected with every A. F. of L. union. There were also certain individuals calling themselves "Socialist" who proved to be mere megaphones of the bosses. They did everything possible to injure the workers' chances by spreading defeatist rumors and by repeating the very propaganda the bosses had concocted with the Chamber of Commerce at a secret meeting at the Alexander Hamilton Hotel.

But despite nincompoopery and downright labor treason on the part of these reactionaries, the stoppage won. The

entire movement, involving several thousand workers, cost the union the grand total of \$5.00.

The lesson is: Today, when the surplus labor supply is growing, the short, quick attack upon the bosses must be the rule, hitting hard when work is needed.



**W**E rejoice to hear a new note of militancy in the reply of the Railroad Labor Unions, under the leadership of President A. F. Whitney of the Railway Trainmen, to

### Fight Wage Cuts

the demand of the roads for fresh wage cuts. A year ago the unions accepted a temporary 10 per cent cut, with the understanding that basic rates were not to be touched. The CPLA argued against accepting even this temporary reduction. The unions were promised, however, that the roads would make great efforts to put additional men back to work. As a matter of fact an additional 100,000 railroad workers have been laid off since that temporary agreement went into effect. In spite of this further reduction in the working forces and the growing misery among the railroad workers and their families, the roads now want, not only to continue the temporary cut but to open the way for reduction in basic rates.

Union representatives have flatly refused to consider any change in the latter, but the temporary ten per cent of last year has been extended for another nine months.

We call upon the railroad workers to stand firm. President Whitney is absolutely correct in asserting that if the railroad workers had taken another cut, another cycle of wage-cutting in industry generally was bound to follow. There is already talk of another cut for steel workers. Better a strike of railroad workers to show the employing class, once for all, that wage-cutting and the consequent degradation of the American standard of living must stop, than further dilly-dallying with the slow misery which now prevails. Let workers all along the line enter upon the new year with the determination to fight wage cuts.



**W**E received through the United States mails recently an interesting little leaflet entitled "Tax Topics." It is sent out by a prominent publishing house, to advertise what they call a *Tax Course* which they sell for \$10.

### How To Rob The Government

"It is only natural that you should be interested in saving all the taxes you legitimately can," naively asserts the leaflet. "And, as you know, the right kind of information may save you thousands of dollars this year and next.

"The new 1933 Federal Tax Course will show you how you can actually reduce your tax payments. It gives you concrete money-saving suggestions. Here, for example, you can see how you can—

- avoid 90 per cent or more of the tax on checks you are now paying
- adopt a more advantageous method of figuring depreciation
- deduct losses on security transactions
- minimize the tax on security transfers, electrical energy, etc.
- secure deductions and exemptions of income *never before allowed.*"

In permitting this leaflet to be sent through the mails, does the United States government now openly acknowledge the right of the rich to evade the law? Does it now admit, as we radicals have always claimed, that the chief purpose of capitalist law is to protect the wealthy and to oppress the workers?

# The Job Ahead

WITH the presidential election behind us and the New Year ahead, what are the possibilities and what is the nature of our task?

A year ago we predicted that 1932 would see increased unrest and revolt among the workers, including on the one hand strikes and demonstrations and on the other hand threats against conservative and corrupt administrations in the unions. That prediction has been fulfilled. Nineteen thirty-two witnessed the bonus march, farmers' holiday movement, a series of Southern textile strikes, the magnificent strike of the Illinois miners, hunger marches. It has seen a movement of revolt against Brandegee and Fay in New Jersey, against Kaplan, the motion picture czar, in New York, the conviction of Pat Commerford of the Operating Engineers on a charge of failing to make an income tax return on "gifts" made to him by non-union contractors, a more progressive turn in the A. F. of L. convention under pressure from a desperate rank and file. We have no doubt that the workers will engage in more general and more vigorous revolt during the year just ahead.

The uprisings to which we have referred have been spontaneous and genuine, not artificially gotten up. What is not so good is that there is as yet no plan, no guiding force, no philosophy, no clear goal in mind. That is serious, because as we see it the workers of this country will soon be confronted with a problem in revolution--faced with the collapse of the present system and the job of building another, unless they want to submit to Fascist dictatorship.

By this we do not mean that we look for the revolution to break some morning this winter or some pleasant evening next spring. We think that in the U. S. at least the powers-that-be will manage to hold things together a while longer. There may even be a pretty good imitation of a "revival" in business. Undoubtedly, they will try another war to bring on "prosperity," before they give up the ghost. But "revival" if it comes will be temporary, spotty and unstable. Even if for a time it is hectic, before many years we shall be in a worse economic plight than the present one. Nothing has been done either on the national or the international plane to remedy basic evils.

If this analysis is correct, it determines the real nature of the task which militants have in the present period. That task then becomes that of taking a working-class which has had a capitalist mind and which today is bewildered and doesn't know its own mind and making that class realize that it must get ready for a revolutionary job, ready to take control of government and industry, ready to take control of its own destiny or be enslaved. A labor movement must be built which has the will, the courage, the intelligence to face a job as big as this.

The task, if our analysis is correct, is precise and urgent. Those who think there is all kinds of time, those who think that a mild and vague progressivism will fill the need, those who shrink from action which is the great mass-educator, are in fact, even if not in intention, betraying the workers. The CPLA must continue to talk to American workers in their own language, it must meet them where they are, but its message of realistic facing of a revolutionary task must be clear and insistent.

Secondly, full support must be given to the movement to organize the unemployed. It is a movement of vast potential significance. Naturally, therefore, serious dangers threaten it. Old party politicians want to use Unemployed

Leagues to get votes. There is danger they may not go beyond "Self-Help," that well-meaning theorists will organize barter systems, which will do no more to place industry under the control of the workers and to oust the capitalists than cooperative colonies, self-governing workshops and other such panacea have done. But many of the leagues are real struggle-organizations, they are doing collective bargaining, gaining political experience as well as training in dramatic direct action, and significantly enough are now meeting injunctions, strong-arm squads, etc., just as unions have.

The work among the unemployed must be closely linked with the work of organizing the basic industries as CPLA is doing in several instances. The experiences of the past year in Southern textiles has shown that just as soon as there is the least pick-up in any industry revolts against wage-cuts, long hours, speed-up, etc., are bound to occur. Despite all the difficulties and the desperate shortage of men and money, we must maintain and extend our contacts in mining, textiles, steel, the food industry and others, so that these revolts may bring the largest possible organizational results.

Fourth, the campaign against autocracy, corruption, gangsterism and racketeering must be pushed vigorously. Under present policies and leadership many unions are a hindrance and not a help to the building of an effective labor movement. But we do not want to disrupt and smash unions. We do want to smash such policies and leadership. The CPLA has been the one agency in the labor movement which has persistently refused to countenance disruption or to compromise with corruption. Recent events have shown that we can get results. We predict that this year will be an even more uncomfortable one for labor czars than the past.

On the political field there is greater need than ever for making our own theoretical position clear, educating our members in the fundamentals of that position and building secure and enthusiastic loyalty thereby. Equally the need remains for propagandizing for a united mass labor party. Workers had no entirely satisfactory choice in the last election, no party that they felt to be really theirs, save in exceptional instances, as those who belong to non-racketeering unions, e. g. feel those unions to be theirs. That was one of the reasons why the vote for opposition parties was so small. Obviously a mass labor party movement cannot be artificially created. Existing political and theoretical groups can, however, either cold-shoulder the proposition or actively encourage it. We are for encouraging it. We stand for a united front here, as in industrial struggles.

So far as the carrying out of the program in detail is concerned, there we must be realistic and flexible. It is certain to be a year of action, of swift and bewildering changes. Those who do not have a sound, clearly understood and firmly held point of view will be utterly lost. Equally will disaster overtake those who do not know how in such a period to adapt themselves to circumstances in order to take the fullest advantage of them.

Forward into 1933, then, with a program of revolutionary working-class education, determined thinking through of our own position and loyalty to it, promotion of the unemployed work, organization in the basic industries, clean-up in the unions and a united labor party!

# Has The A. F. of L. Gone Left?

by A. J. Muste

**H**AS the American Federation of Labor gone left? Is it becoming militant, progressive and effective? This question stands out as a result of the A. F. of L. convention recently held in Cincinnati.

The first impression is certainly that something "revolutionary" has happened. President Green caused a tremendous demonstration in the convention and precipitated a lot of talk outside when in a debate on the 6-hour day and the 5-hour week he roundly asserted: "We will not be denied the realization of this great reform. The world must know we must be given it in response to reason or we will secure it through force of some kind." And again: "I propose to find some way, to suggest some plan even though it may be to resort to forceful methods to compel industry to give us this great reform."

The *New York Times*, staunch supporter of President Green and his cautious and conciliatory policies, was pained, shocked and frightened by this outburst. It gave vent to its emotions in a leading editorial over a column in length on November 30: "Surprise and disappointment will be caused by the speech of President Green at the convention of the A. F. of L. at Cincinnati. He has been reckoned among the most steady-going and reasonable labor leaders. . . . But on Monday his demand for a 5-day week and 6-hour day was couched in what was claimed by the assembled delegates as the greatest fighting speech of his career. . . . Such a militant attitude is doubly unfortunate. It cannot fail to be disturbing to all who think of the A. F. of L. under its present leadership as inclined to avoid extremes of all kinds and to seek to maintain and perhaps enlarge the gains of organized labor by carefully studied means and by conciliatory methods."

To cite one other illustration, Carl Haessler, a radical but keen observer who has attended A. F. of L. conventions for a great many years, begins his summary of the latest one with these words: "The most interesting and the most hopeful convention since the Montreal gathering in 1920 declared for the Plumb Plan of government ownership of the railroads—that is the verdict of delegates to the 52nd annual convention of the A. F. of L. It was more pugnacious within the sessions and committee meetings, more militant on broad questions of labor policy and markedly to the left of re-

## To Form Progressive

### Federation of Labor

*As we go to press we learn that the Gillespie Trades and Labor Council, composed of various local unions of the American Federation of Labor, have issued a call for a state-wide conference to be held in Gillespie, December 27. The purpose of the conference will be to form a progressive federation of labor along the same lines as the Progressive Miners of America, which, with a membership of 32,000 members and steadily gaining in strength, has endorsed the movement.*

*Calls for the conference have been mailed to every local union and trades council throughout the state of Illinois. Copies of the call have been mailed to sympathetic groups throughout the country. Efforts are being made to secure the cooperation of the unemployed faction who were ejected from the Cincinnati convention.*

*The full statement of the Gillespie Trades and Labor Council, addressed to all labor groups, is published on page 23.*

cent years."

Comes the time to rub one's eyes and to ask whether a miracle has happened?

## Encouraging Signs

When one penetrates a little below the surface, there are indeed significant and encouraging features about this 1932 convention which set it off from others in recent years. In the first place, it is very significant that President Green in the speech on the 6-hour day and 5-day week, to which we have already referred, had to admit publicly that the policy of "peace and conciliation," of trying to sell unionism and its ideas to the employers, of hoping to get advances for labor by winning the good will of the employing class, had failed and that labor must fight for what it gets. It is worth while quoting a few more sentences from

this speech in order to get its full import. "The trouble has been, as we have pointed out in the Executive Council's report, that industrial management seems never to have learned. They do not respond to the appeals made to their hearts, their minds and their consciences. They seem to think we will follow the old line and that eventually some power not yet in evidence will correct our economic ills. Labor knows that every reform we have ever secured, every definite gain that has come to us for realization and enjoyment, has really been forced from the reluctant managers of industry."

For saying exactly this certain progressives have been denounced in recent years as Bolsheviks and as the enemies of the labor movement. Even certain so-called radicals denounced the CPLA when in December 1929 we attacked the agreement with Hoover into which Green and other labor leaders entered, not to ask for wage increases, an agreement which was the logical outcome of the policy of keeping in the good graces of the employers. Where might not the American labor movement and the American workers be today if during the past decade, or even since the crash of 1929, the labor movement had followed a policy of militancy, basing its power on the enthusiasm and solidarity of the workers and not on the toleration of the boss? How differently the story of the Southern textile organizing campaign might read today if in 1929 President Green had gone to the workers in the South with a fighting appeal instead of to the bankers and to the bosses with his labored and sickening attempt to prove that the A. F. of L. was safe, sane and respectable and the strongest bulwark against Bolshevism in the U. S.! Nevertheless, it is something now to have the mistake thus openly admitted.

## Unemployment Insurance Wins

In the second place, the passage of the resolution for unemployment insurance was an important advance. There are some serious shortcomings in the A. F. of L.'s proposals. Benefits under the scheme will certainly not be much. The highest a man can get in a year will be \$240. If all the 12 million who are today unemployed were to get the maximum sum, it would amount to only about 3 billion dollars this year, whereas the

A. F. of L. itself estimates that their wage bill has been cut by 25 billion as compared to 1929. On the other hand, it is estimated that under our present system, the total relief bill this year will amount to less than half a billion dollars, and 3 billion in insurance payments would certainly be an improvement.

The A. F. of L. proposal leaves the way open for some industries or firms to set up insurance schemes of their own, though under state control. Under such a plan the very workers who are unemployed for the longest periods will be working for firms that find it most difficult to build up unemployment reserves and these workers will therefore be less likely to have substantial insurance funds to draw on. The plan of separate funds for separate firms assumes that a single firm can do a great deal to regulate employment, an assumption which seems utterly unwarranted under present conditions, when one firm or industry is so largely dependent upon others, upon the banks, upon political measures such as tariffs, and so on.

There should be a clearer and more insistent demand for federal subsidies for states which establish unemployment insurance funds, these subsidies and perhaps some of the money paid within the state to come out of income and inheritance taxes.

On the other hand, we congratulate the A. F. of L. on demanding that no payments are to be made by the workers, and that the workers are not to be forced, in order to get benefits, to accept jobs as strikebreakers or below the prevailing rate of wages. In any event, the fact that the A. F. of L. is now squarely on record for unemployment insurance, when only two years ago at the Boston convention a mere handful dared to vote for the proposal which had been viciously denounced as un-American and Bolshevik by Matthew Woll, suggests that "the world do move."

In the third place, the official adoption of the 6-hour day and the 5-day week as a goal of labor effort is important. In fact, it may have revolutionary implications which the A. F. of L. does not guess. For the first effect under the present system of cutting hours so drastically without cutting weekly wages will be to increase the cost of production. This would presumably mean shutting down still more plants. And this would mean?

It is proposed that for government employes and for railroad workers who come under the provisions of the Interstate Commerce Act, the 6-hour

day should be enacted by legislation and that some "militant union" shall be picked out to serve as the "spearhead" in the drive for securing the reform among privately owned and controlled industries.

We may note that the refusal of the convention to pass a resolution proposed by the Metal Trades Department to urge Congress to build a navy up to the strength allowed under the London Treaty, as well as the passage of a resolution demanding that profits be taken out of the making of munitions and other war preparations, is a refreshing contrast to the monotonously pro-militarist trend at recent A. F. of L. conventions. There is no question that pressure from a desperate rank and file suffering from unemployment, short time and wage cuts has made the A. F. of L. leaders bestir themselves and has caused a general shift to the left.

### Not So Hot?

Nevertheless we think that those who assume that the organization and its leaders have turned definitely and genuinely progressive, that they are headed for a grand revival and rapidly increasing effectiveness, are leaving a number of very important factors out of the reckoning.

In the first place, it is obvious that an organization which is going to do battle against the bankers and the employing class, and not merely talk about it, needs power. What are the facts about the membership and the general strength of the A. F. of L. today? According to the Executive Council's report, the dues-paying membership for 1932 is 2,532,261, a drop of 357,289 from last year. Only 8 out of the 106 national or international unions affiliated with the A. F. of L. show any gain this year. They are Operating Engineers, Stationary Firemen, Rural Letter Carriers, Meat Cutters, Pilots, Railway Mail Association, American Federation of Teachers and Tobacco Workers. Nearly all of these are small organizations and the gains in no case amounted to more than 1,000 members.

Twenty-one organizations managed, according to the E. C. report, to hold their own. The larger ones in this group are Brewery Workers, Cigar Makers, Fire Fighters, Letter Carriers, Sheet Metal Workers, Plumbers, Post Office Clerks, Pressmen and Stage Employes. It will be noticed that organizations in the government employ figure prominently in this list.

The unions which suffered the heaviest losses include the Barbers,

Boot and Shoe Workers, Bricklayers, Hod Carriers, Leather Workers, Seamen and Teamsters, several of them organizations of very great importance in the Federation. These figures do not, however, tell the whole story. For example, the United Mine Workers, which has been reporting, and presumably paying per-capita to the A. F. of L., on an inflated membership of 400,000 in recent years, this year reports a membership of 308,000. According to the U. M. W. of A.'s own records, however, this figure would have to be reduced by at least 50 per cent in order to get at the real membership today. Many of the unions which show no drop in membership are, as is well known, terribly weakened by unemployment on the one hand, or such evils as racketeering and gangsterism on the other.

It appears that some real organizing work will have to be done if the A. F. of L. is to be able to put up a fight against the forces massed against it, and the plans for such organizing work ought to form an important, if not the most important, part of labor's program in the present crisis. In the past, when labor battled for the 10-hour day and later the 8-hour day, these demands were made slogans in an organizing campaign by which new forces were added to the ranks. If the present movement for the 6-hour day is not accompanied by such a campaign, it is very doubtful whether it will mean anything for the mass of American workers. In recent years, for example, a number of A. F. of L. unions in the building trades have cut down hours of labor to 44 or 40 per week, and this on the A. F. of L.'s own showing was not accompanied by any substantial reduction in hours for workers in the unorganized industries.

On this crucial point of organizing work the Executive Council's report to the Cincinnati convention and the convention proceedings themselves are if anything even more disgracefully weak than has been the case in the recent past. In the E.C.'s report of about 100 pages there is less than one page devoted to organizing work. What is said there is utterly childish and beside the point as, for example: "Additions to unions in depressions will bring members who believe in the ideals for which our movement stands. Adversity is a character-building experience." All the concrete plan for organizing work in the basic industries which the A. F. of L. presents is summed up in these two mighty sentences: "In the coming year we must depend upon personal appeal as our



chief reliance in spreading the cause of unionism," and in the second place, "We urge unions in all localities to begin continuous efforts for organizing workers during this coming year."

Perhaps the reader questions whether organizing work is not exceedingly difficult in such times as this and whether it is not natural that the A. F. of L. should steer clear of it. Undoubtedly organizing work is difficult now. New methods will have to be devised. That is no excuse, however, for such utter evasion of the key problem as the A. F. of L. is guilty of. Furthermore, if the employed cannot easily be organized today, there are many indications that the unemployed can be. There is, in fact, a rapidly growing network of unemployed organizations throughout the land, some of which indeed are only "chiselling brigades" but many of which are taking on the characteristics of unions, collective bargaining, etc., and which, by the way, the authorities are now beginning to attack by the injunction method as they are in the habit of attacking unions.

Surely if a vigorous labor movement is to be built under the economic conditions which we now have, it is of the utmost importance that the unemployed leagues be linked up with the unions. A fairly careful search reveals not a word on this subject in the Executive Council's report, though there is plenty of discussion of the unemployment situation generally, and no serious consideration of this strategy in the convention itself. This indicates an utter lack of organizational sense which certainly does not bode well for the future of the A. F. of L.

### No More Racketeers

If in some respects a period like the present is not favorable for extending organization, it is an excellent time to clean house and put existing unions on a sounder basis. The rank and file in the unions are less tolerant of abuses than in the heyday of prosperity. President Green and the Executive Council some months ago professed themselves greatly stirred by racketeering, gangsterism, corruption, autocracy and allied evils in the unions. They stated that they were going to take extreme measures to drive these evils out. President Green went so far as to threaten the expulsion from the A. F. of L. of international unions which permitted their locals to tolerate such "leeches" as gangsters and racketeers.

Not a word about this crucial subject in the Executive Council's report. Nothing serious was done about it in

the convention. On the eve of the convention the CPLA, in pursuance of its campaign against these evils, sent a communication to the Executive Council through President Green, urging that effect be given to the earlier pronouncements by the Executive Council on the subject, and that the whole problem be made one of the outstanding features of this convention. In a formal interview President Green notified reporters who questioned him on the subject that while there were naughty individuals in the A. F. of L., the same as in any other human organization, what racketeering and gangsterism there may once have been had been done away with!

There were rumors before the convention that the heads of important international unions were sore at President Green for his pronouncements on corruption and racketeering and had started a movement to remove him from the presidency and elect someone else in his place. As we predicted nothing came of these rumors. Simple souls will wonder, however, whether the sudden silence had some connection with President Green's discovery that racketeering and corruption had now practically disappeared from A. F. of L. unions.

Ironically enough the only resolution looking toward liberalizing the A. F. of L. administration and making it more responsive to the mass of trade union membership was that introduced by John L. Lewis, president of the U. M. W. of A. That resolution proposed that the membership of the Executive Council should be increased from 11 to 28. We say it is ironical that such a resolution should be introduced by John L. Lewis, whose reign in his own union during the past dozen years has been one of unrestrained and brutal autocracy, and who is today party to a plan under which miners in Southern Illinois are forced to work at the point of machine guns. Amid all this, progressives may perhaps take some comfort from the fact that Matthew Woll was certainly a much less prominent figure in this recent convention. However, they will also do well to wait a little longer before deciding that the A. F. of L. has gone completely left. They may even question whether an organization which takes such an attitude toward corruption in its own midst can at all survive.

Resolutions for a labor party were practically unanimously defeated in the Cincinnati convention. The A. F. of L. leadership thinks the Democratic sweep represents a victory for labor

and looks for favors from the Roosevelt regime. A resolution reaffirming the A. F. of L. stand against recognition of Soviet Russia was carried without opposition. No real attention was paid in this convention to relations of American labor with the international labor movement.

As for underlying philosophy, there was certainly less talk of individualism and much more talk about the need for government action in this convention than in previous ones. The A. F. of L., however, unquestionably still thinks in terms of humanitarianism and not of class struggle. It wants to preserve the capitalist system, not abolish it. President Green's peroration on opening the convention reads: "We are here to work for the workers. They have confidence in the American Federation of Labor. It is really the voice of labor in the nation. They expect us to speak for them and we hope and trust that we will make through our constructive action taken at this convention a valuable contribution toward the restoration of our impaired capitalist structure."

We repeat that the question whether the A. F. of L. has turned genuinely progressive, even the question whether it can survive, has not yet been answered.

It cannot survive unless it does become progressive and militant in fact and not merely in words. That means a carefully thought out plan of organization in the basic industries and vigorous action for the realization of the plan; support of the efforts of the unemployed to organize and the linking up of these organizations with the trade union movement; relentless struggle against corruption, gangsterism, racketeering, autocracy and allied evils in existing unions; a labor party; a philosophy of struggle which will enable labor to see capitalism as its enemy and to set itself with courage and determination to the building of a new order.

The weakness of reformers in every field has always been that their efforts are spasmodic, that they are easily satisfied with small triumphs and then rest from their labors, giving reactionary forces an easy opportunity to more than regain their losses. This is no time for progressives and militants to fall into this error. This is no time for us to rejoice overmuch in the advances made by the recent convention and to forget its appalling weaknesses and its tragic mistakes. This is the time to set our faces, stiffen our backs and drive on more relentlessly than ever toward the realization of our program!



# A Conspiracy in Dividends

by Jerome Count

NEW York City is supplied with gas and electricity by huge utilities that have been successful regulation dodgers for half a century. In 1930, after hearings before the Legislative Commission on revising the Public Service Law, one of the Commissioners officially reported:

"We are impressed with the fact that four successive legislative investigations, covering a period of more than forty years, have found the same conditions—the utilities seeking excessive profits and attempting to disguise the rate return on actual investment by some form of overvaluation."

The deliberate rate frauds of the Edison System were reported to the Legislature by the same members of the Commission. We quote from the record:

"The story of the Consolidated System \* \* \* reveals the earlier and cruder form of injecting water into the capitalization upon which a return must be earned. The men who presided over the birth of this company first formed a pool among supposedly competing companies, raised the price of gas to consumers and then capitalized the merger of these companies on the basis of the market values of the securities produced by the resulting excessive prices. \* \* \*

"Later, in the process of merging the electrical companies, the evidence shows, properties were bought in through the issuance of purchase money or other mortgages in the full value of the acquisition and an equal amount of stock was then issued to validate the bonds, this stock originally representing no investment at all.

Pointing out that the first Consolidated Gas merger was investigated by the Legislature in 1886, the report continues:

"More than forty years have

passed and the problem of protecting the public interest is no nearer solution. The explanation is that we still have to resort to fictitious valuation by the utility corporations as a cover for unjust exactions against the public."

Concrete evidence for these accusations is not lacking. The Consolidated System, since 1919 alone, has paid out close to a half billion dollars in dividends. Seven million people in New York City each pay an average of \$8 a year for gas and electric *divi-*

again increased by 25 per cent almost \$11,000,000. Employment, however, increased only 5 per cent. Thus, labor received the benefits of increased industry to the extent of 8 per cent, while stockholders reaped 58 per cent in increased dividends.

Did the consumer fare better than Edison employes? He demanded only 10 per cent more power and gas in each year and paid the same excessive rates. For this 10 per cent increase in service, the Edison system exacted 33 per cent and 25 per cent more dividends. Labor, as we saw, shared in the increased business to the extent of 4 per cent more employment for each year.

The Brooklyn Edison Company is an integral part of this system and it is of interest to trace the story of how the Consolidated system engineered the deal authorized by the Public Service Commission, for the purchase of Brooklyn Edison stock, and how the merger "redounded to the public good," as President Sloan then said.

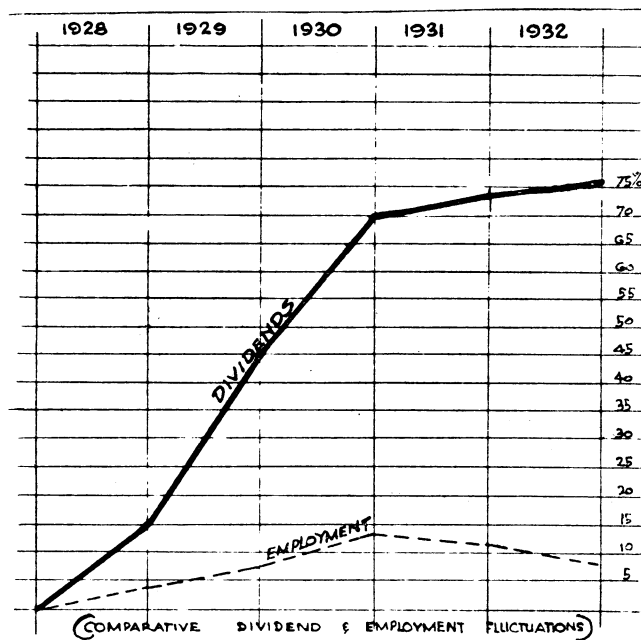
Of this sordid incident in Edison history, the report of the Legislative Commission already cited, said:

"The New York Public Service Commission never acted more openly as an ally to the utility companies than it did in connection with the absorption of the Brooklyn Edison Company by Consolidated Gas in the summer of 1928. This combination meant the rounding out of the control of a single

company over the electric power of New York City. It meant the creation of a giant utility with assets of more than \$1,000,000. It meant the culmination of a series of mergers in practically every one of which considerable quantities of water had been injected into the capitalization."

Notwithstanding the vital importance of this event, the public hearings before the Public Service Commission were cut and dried, consuming only two and a half hours—a mere formal-

HOW GAS AND ELECTRIC WAS "HIT"  
BY DEPRESSION IN NEW YORK CITY



How stockholders profited over labor since Brooklyn Edison combined with Consolidated Gas in 1928

dends—a \$56,000,000 annual bill.

The 1931 annual report of the Public Service Commission reveals data for startling comparisons in the dividend and employment ratio in the entire gas and electric industry of New York City for a three year period extending into the depression. In 1929, dividend payments amounted to \$43,600,000, representing an increase of 33 per cent over the previous year. During this same year employment in this industry increased only 3 per cent! In the following year, dividends

ity, since the matter had been the subject of previous private conference between the Commission and President Sloan of the Edison System. The Public Committee on Power was refused an opportunity by the Public Service Commission, to oppose the deal.

Compare this expedition of the interests of Edison stockholders with that of an attempt by the public to obtain rate reduction. Seven years were consumed before the Commission in rate reduction proceedings upon which a decision has never been rendered, although the matter has been pending since 1923. Five million dollars was "spent" by the Edison company — collected from the public in rates, of course — volumes of testimony were taken, the public spent millions of dollars, but all to no avail. The public was not even rewarded with a decision for its pains. The expedition with which the Edison stockholders obtain favorable action, however, leaves the public to speculate whether the Commission is an Edison adjunct or a State functionary.

Events subsequent to the Commission's approval of this combination of Brooklyn Edison with Consolidated System, leaves little doubt about the stockholders' interest in obtaining the speedy sanction. To begin with, the unification meant an annual saving of \$17,700,000 to the campaign. Mr. Sloan testified to this under oath and has promised that this would be passed on to the public in reduced rates. Seventy million eight hundred thousand dollars should now be accumulated by virtue of these savings. Let the small consumer compare his present electric bill with that of four years ago and discover how much of this saving has been passed on to him.

Past Edison records lead us to suspect that subsequent stock dividends may account for these savings. Let us see: Within the space of a few months of the same year, the Consolidated System raised the dividend rate by \$8,000,000 per annum more than before the combination with Brooklyn Edison. The following year the dividends were again increased, so that the former holders of Brooklyn Edison stock and the holders of Consolidated stock promptly received \$18,000,000 more in dividends than before the merger.

It is little wonder that citizens of New York were skeptical when they read the misleading announcement (for which, by the way, they themselves paid \$25,000 in electric rates) advertised in New York dailies by the

Edison System. President Sloan composed the "Ad" himself. The underscoring is ours:

"The first benefit to the public from consolidation and unification of management of the electric service companies of Greater New York. \* \* \* Because of *anticipated economies in operation as a result of the unification* of the companies \* \* \* we have decided, with the approval of the Public Service Commission, to reduce the charges added to your electric service bills *on account of variations in the price of coal.*

\* \* \*

"We want you to know that whenever economies are achieved the resulting savings will be shared with you and the benefits passed on for your advantage."

The announcement did not attempt to demonstrate the relation between the decrease in the price of coal to the merger of Brooklyn Edison with Consolidated System. It left the public to swallow the fraud along with excessive rates. The record before the Legislative Investigating Commission shows that the coal surcharge was eliminated only after the System had mulcted the public of \$20,000,000 in excess charges, and long after the price of coal justified the surcharge. The coal-surcharge elimination was thrown as bait to the public in the guise of "unification savings" which were actually diverted to stockholders.

Edison schemes for concealing profits know no limits. It is conservatively estimated that the Consolidated System is fictitiously over-valued as high as \$200,000,000 for rate making purposes. Vast reserves have been accumulated for purposes which will never be met. When the New York consumer pays 20c in every electric dollar for Edison dividends that is only half the tale. Statistics of Municipal ownership of utilities verify the fact that New York consumers pay at least 50c in every dollar spent for electric to the private purposes of Edison stockholders in the form of dividends, reserves and additions to capital.

Through this glittering gold mine runs the black vein of Brooklyn Edison's labor record. A 40 per cent decrease in employees! Five thousand men thrown on the bread line! Seven and a half million dollars yearly decrease in wages! Perhaps President Parker is more astute than was Matthew S. Sloan, in explaining how this saving too has "redounded to the public good."

## Strike Resolution

(Adopted at meeting of the Executive Committee of the Brotherhood of Edison Employees, Friday, December 16, at 128 East 16th Street, Manhattan)

BE IT RESOLVED, That, since our appeals to public authorities and agencies have led to no results whatsoever, and since the company has increased its surplus in the past two years by \$7,500,000 and its dividends by \$2,800,000 while cutting its wage payments by \$5,000,000 and laying off 5,000 men, the following action is hereby authorized in the Brooklyn Edison system and the secretary is instructed to carry it into effect:

That strike machinery be set up on January first, with a view to taking strike action as quickly thereafter as possible.

That in the setting up of this strike machinery care be taken to see that emergency electric service for hospitals and other social emergency agencies be maintained.

That a special meeting of the Executive Committee be held on Wednesday, December 28, to consider the detailed plans completed or outlined.

That the Executive Committee function as a strike committee after January first, with daily meetings if necessary.

That the Executive Committee take special precautions to safeguard the identity of Brotherhood members until actual date of strike action.

That an intensive public campaign be undertaken to educate the general public in the justice of the Brotherhood's claims.

NOTE: After adoption of this resolution, Jerome Count, counsel for the Public Committee on Power Utilities and Labor got in touch with the Executive Secretary and the following amendment to the above resolution was enacted:

That above action be held in abeyance pending the outcome of legal prosecution of petition of complaint sponsored by the Public Committee on Power Utilities and Labor and to be filed by its counsel, Mr. Count.

In the event of failure of the outcome of legal proceedings the Executive Committee proceed to formulate tentative plans for strike action.

Secretary

WM. BEEDIE



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## Organizing the Jobless

by Louis Francis Budenz

**I**NJUNCTION is hurled at the Smith Township Unemployed League by the commissioners of Mahoning County, Ohio. Six of the leading members of the league are solemnly enjoined from "obstructing relief" by seeking more relief! A strike atmosphere pervades the organized jobless in that section of the Buckeye State.

Such action follows shortly after the definite formation of the Ohio Unemployed League, at the November 9th convention at Niles. The public officials are clearly frightened at this organization which meets and defeats them on their own grounds. Encouraged, the officer of the state's organized unemployed push their plans for a state gathering in Columbus, to give emphasis to their legislative program.\*

Meanwhile, a Middle Western regional conference of unemployed organizations is held in Chicago. Convention, to see what further may be done, is set for May. A program very similar to that of the Ohio Unem-

ployed League is adopted as the basis for additional action.

Likewise, the national Information Bulletin organized by the Pittsburgh Unemployed Citizens League gets out its second issue. It reports a wide-flung number of organizations, with diverse programs and differing aims which are groping for a common mode of expression.

Such items in the labor news of the month reflect the continued getting together of the workless. With the captains of Finance and Industry seeking an outlet from the depression in further wage cutting and lay-offs, the prospect of a large army of the unemployed increases. Even the slight artificial up-turn which may come will not affect this process, the machine being pressed into service to speed-up the out-of-work problem. In such a background this tendency to organization among the unemployed is an unconscious realization that they have become members of a new grouping. They are bound to play an important

part in our future economic and political life.

If the economic trend makes the unemployed organizations inevitable, what shall be done to encourage their growth and allow them to reach the maximum of effectiveness?

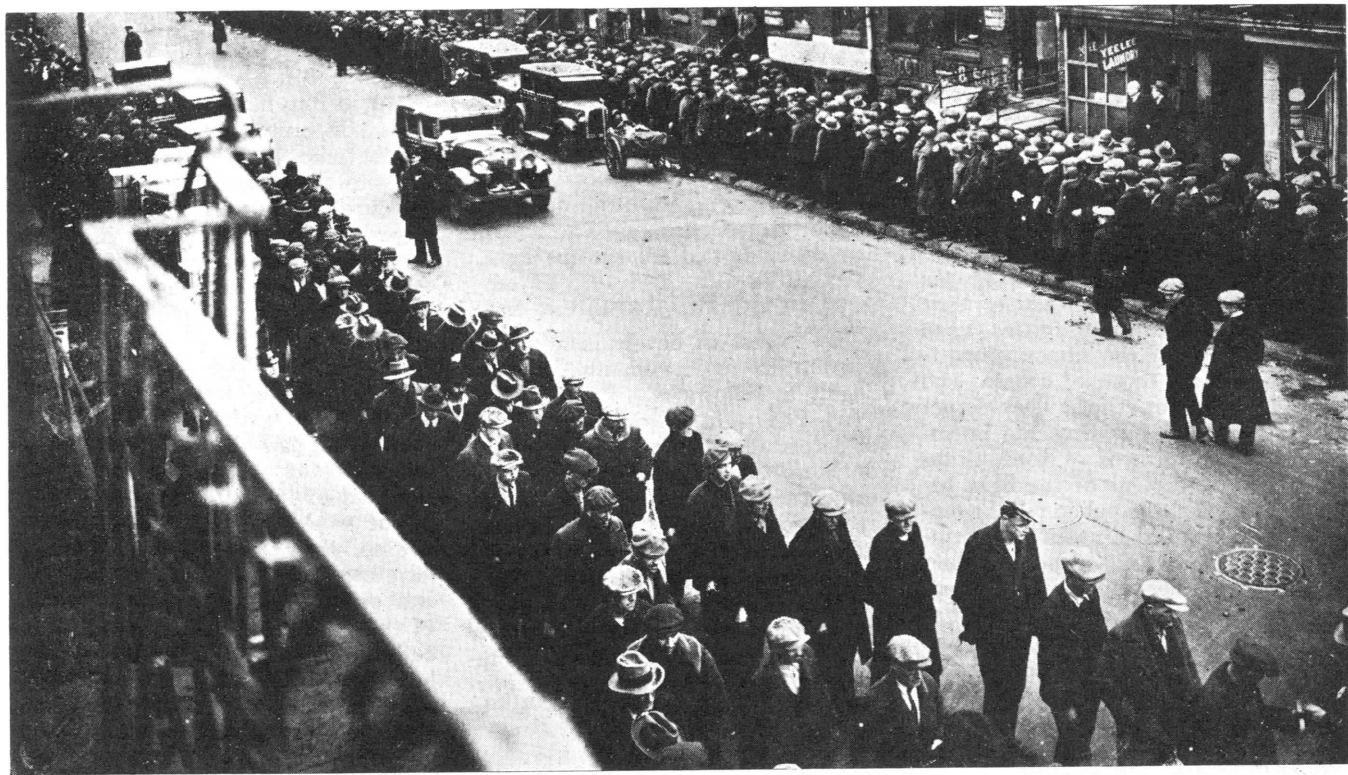
Observation and experience seem to point to the following items as essentials in the doing of the job:

### Objectives of Action

1. *Cohesive and continuing organization, with permanent membership, should be a chief aim.* If that is secured, other things are likely to follow. We have had several generations of non-unionism in this country. There is a tendency, therefore, for the unemployed to do one or two things and then to lose interest. They have not yet acquired the knack of orderly organizational functioning; this they must acquire in the leagues of their own making.

It is important that unemployed leagues be rooted in the community, just as unions must be rooted in an industry. They must not only be open to all the unemployed, regardless of their beliefs or color, but must win

\*Among the officers of the state organization are: William R. Truax, chairman; George Perkins, vice-chairman, and V. C. Bauhof, secretary.



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the membership of a large and representative section of these folks if they are to function properly. The most backward workers, as well as the most advanced, must be included, and must be given consideration. Otherwise, you will have a great hullabaloo—which may gain some concessions—attended by no real organizational response among the workless as a whole.

2. *The growing demands of the unemployed must develop out of their experience and not be foisted upon them.* This is of the utmost importance. There are those, of course, who decry the fight for relief. They do not realize that that is where the unemployed stand: in need of food, clothing and shelter. Out of the fight before and against the public relief agencies, they learn the necessity of increasing their demands and of going forward to other measures. By opposing private relief and insisting upon governmental relief, moreover, the unemployed are constantly mounting up the costs of government and hastening a general show-down.

### Weakness of "Self-Help"

Some organizations which have turned into fighting agencies have begun with self-help. Soon, the impossibility of self-help as a means of getting anywhere was realized by the membership; the unemployed then moved on to the fight before the public officials. The only excuse for self-help can be as a cement, in the beginning, to keep the organization together, in order to push the members into further action. As a rule, it should be avoided if that is at all possible. Such self-help is very likely to degenerate into organized beggary and to take away the fighting edge of the organization. It is the task of militant workers to interpret the experience of the jobless in fighting terms. If the jobless themselves look upon self-help as the way to begin, such a beginning should be made. But it should be dropped quickly and the organized strength of the group should be centered on the fight for public relief.

3. *The jobless should be encouraged to fight, care being taken that the mass of the membership move along and participate in the fight.* Such militancy does not express itself solely in demonstrations. It shows itself in the bearding of the local officials in their dens and forcing them to act or get out of office. From there, the battle inevitably goes into the State and then into the nation. The fight should be so engineered that the officials are made to look ridiculous in their stand

against relief. Many of the jobless start out with the impression that these officials are their friends; in the course of the battle, this myth must be exploded and nothing will do it more than by making the officials look absurd. The more results obtained and the more victories won, the more will the jobless feel encouraged to expand their demands and enlarge the fight.

### Steps in the Program

The process of development of the program in most communities runs roughly as follows:

(a) The fight before the officials for decent administration of relief and for more adequate relief; (b) The formulation of demands, out of the preparation of actual "mere existence" budgets, that the public officials declare to be "impossible"; (c) The consequent demand that, as men and women must live and those in power are bankrupt, that the control of relief first, and then industry and government be given over to the workers.\*\*

The important point is, that the workless out of their own experience go along with these developments. Any one can raise the last demand first, but if few back it up in the community the whole business will not actually amount to much.

Accompanying these efforts must be the resort to direct action on every possible occasion, to stimulate the fighting spirit of the jobless. Strikes and picketing by the unemployed should be encouraged in such a way as to bring mass response. Demonstrations against evictions are likewise essential tasks.

4. *The dream of those who think that they can expand self-help into a "cooperative commonwealth" within the present system must be exploded.* The whole effort to bring about "moneyless economies" and "barter and exchange communities" takes off the fighting edge of the jobless. It serves as an opium against their militancy and gives them hopes of attaining peaceably what can never be realized in that way. There is, then, a reactionary danger in such enterprises. Instead of putting the burden on the state, where it belongs, and thereby bringing about a show-down, they assist those

\*\*In a following article Budenz will outline the detailed step-by-step measures which experience seems to make necessary in unemployed work, including "how to start," "how to build up pressure groups" and the relationship of unionism and the labor party idea to the unemployed.

who are in control of the State and Industry by temporarily relieving that burden.

No matter how champions of this idea may protest that their intention is otherwise, these enterprises if they grow to any extent, imperil the living standards and wage scales of the employed workers. They do it in such a way as to tend to bring about eventual division and despair among the workers rather than solidarity and struggle.\*\*\*

To sum up: The American unemployed men and women stand today stunned and confused. They know that in the past the prevailing regime in this country brought them a higher standard of living than anywhere else in the world, on the whole. Were it not so, their forefathers would not have come here from abroad. Capitalism provided a considerable number of them with radios, automobiles and bath-tubs in the past. For a time they believed that Capitalism would recover and preserve these things for them. But as days go by, they are losing everything. Even the possibility of getting food is denied them. They are beginning to lose faith in their old idols.

It is there that the unemployed organization idea comes to them. Their first effort naturally is for food, clothing and shelter. Out of that step they will go further, if stimulated to do so.

To get them solidly organized is the Alpha and Omega of the problem. That requires patience. It requires an understanding of their taboos and of how these can be translated into advanced action, to meet their difficulties. It compels steps to offset petty local politicians who will always seek to short-circuit the organized unemployed, just as they have emasculated the labor unions. Above all, it calls for keeping the unemployed together at all costs, in order that they may learn out of their joint endeavors the necessity for marching forward to greater power.

\*\*\*A logical development of the 'self-help' idea as an end in itself is the Dayton, Ohio, effort in which the workless are diluted of all militancy and kept busy at petty "barter and exchange" businesses.

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Turn to page 27 for the very interesting statement sent to Labor Age by Vincent Bauhof, secretary of the Smith Township Unemployed League referred to by Comrade Budenz in his article.

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# Philadelphia U. C. L. Carries On

THE Philadelphia Unemployed Citizens' League as has been related in previous issues of LABOR AGE was organized by 12 men in June, 1932.

The League planned to organize on the same basis that had been so successful in Seattle, Washington. It took its makeshift by-laws from issues of LABOR AGE in which was printed the constitution of the Seattle League. No bars were put upon membership, the doors were thrown open and any one who was genuinely interested in working for the welfare of the unemployed was invited to join. Socialists, CPLAers, members of the A. F. of L. unions, radicals of all varieties and conservatives were among its initial members. It seemed that for a while at least a real united front had been achieved among the various labor factions in Philadelphia.

The first Chairman of the League was Edward Gentsch, an S. P. member, and the Secretary was John Godber, CPLA member. In a short space of time the League grew from 12 members to several hundred. A relief committee was organized which after a time functioned in a very efficient manner. An eviction committee soon became the terror of the Philadelphia Constables, and it was the proud boast that out of dozens of cases it had lost only one. The work of the League soon focused upon it the attention of the entire community. The United Textile Workers donated the use of the Carpet Weavers' Hall as a headquarters.

After several weeks of intensive work in which the League was making rapid strides. CPLA elements in it began to notice certain undercover work taking place. At first it was hardly perceptible but gradually those behind it came more and more to the forefront.

## Leading Groups Within League

To understand the situation and to get an accurate picture of what took place we must first analyze the various groups which comprised the leadership of the League and their motives and purposes in working within the organization.

First of all we have the Socialist Party element represented chiefly by Franz Daniels, Organizer of the Philadelphia Local. Daniels in particular, was very enthusiastic about the League in the beginning, but as it progressed

by Edmund F. Ryan, Jr.

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*This article is published at the request of the Philadelphia Branch of the CPLA. It is perhaps needless to add that in spite of such unfortunate experiences as are here recorded, neither the CPLA as a whole nor the Philadelphia Branch has changed its fundamental position that unemployed leagues should be non-partisan in character and should unite all possible elements in honest and effective cooperation to protect and advance the interests of the unemployed.*

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he took a less active part in it. It now seems that the chief motive of the S. P. element was to use the organization for political purposes. In other words, they felt that if a good Thomas-Maurer campaign committee was moulded out of it, it had achieved its purpose. Later we shall see how when the S. P. members failed in their object they united with the conservative trade union element to drive the CPLA out of the League.

Next we have the conservative trade union faction, represented chiefly by William F. Kelly and Joseph Steiner, both organizers of the United Textile Workers and Kelly second vice-president. This element was confused and muddled from the start, having no idea of just what work the League should do. But after seeing that other people had made a success out of it they then attempted to use it for their own purposes.

Finally, we have the CPLA element who were among the originators, and the guiding spirit from the start. We recognized the danger of having the League become in any way a political organization, and were also probably the only element in it who had any clear and definite ideas as to the future of the organization.

## Conservatives and Reactionaries Declare War

The first open warfare took place when the time rolled around for elections to be held for official and executive board members. It had been understood that the officers serving first had only been appointed temporarily and that on the first of September regular elections would be held for the coming year.

On the night of nominations the S. P. and U. T. W. elements tried to force through a motion before the general membership meeting which would dispense with the elections and keep the present officials in power for another year. This was done because on the first executive board our comrades had only three members, but everyone knew full well that at this election several more would be returned. Also we were dissatisfied with Gentsch as Chairman and intended to run Comrade I. L. Weinberg against him.

Weinberg, one of the early members of the organization, had done a tremendous amount of work for the League and had a big following among the rank and file, although cordially detested by the conservative faction because he, more than anyone else, was in a position to know the inside workings of the League and what actually was taking place. After a bitter fight on the floor a motion was passed compelling the official family to hold an election. The next week nominations were made and Weinberg was picked to run against William Skillian, one of the U. T. W. men.

On the night before the election was to be held, Franz Daniels at an executive board meeting (on which by the way the machine held a big majority) preferred charges against Weinberg pertaining to certain acts which Weinberg was alleged to have committed while a member of the Socialist Party in 1921 and 1929, and claimed that these acts were sufficient to prevent Weinberg from being a candidate. The executive board thereupon suspended Weinberg and removed the names of the candidates for Chairman from the ballot. In the elections which were held for the other offices the CPLA element gained eight of the nineteen seats on the executive committee.

The Weinberg case dragged on for weeks, the Old Guard seemingly taking the position that matters should stand as they were with Weinberg suspended and given no chance to defend himself before an impartial body. Finally, our comrades on the executive board forced the case before an impartial chairman, Mr. Hugh F. Munro, a well-known liberal in this city. Mr. Munro, at an open membership meeting of the League, on October 23, ruled that Weinberg should be rein-

(Continued on page 28)



# The Case of the Arkansas Farmer

by Clay Fulks

**T**HE case of the Arkansas farmer will be briefly considered in these two aspects: First, his actual economic condition; and, second, his reaction to this condition.

In dealing with the first, it is necessary to present certain statistics; whereas, in discussing the second, one must define or describe the farmers' state of mind as revealed by his behavior.

According to the Census definition of a "farm," there are about 250,000 farms in Arkansas and on these lives a population of about 1,250,000. Arkansas is one of the most predominantly agricultural States of the Union, about three-fourths of the population being on farms. Somewhat more than half the farmers of the State are tenant farmers, the remainder, of course, being owners and "independent" operators. The tenant class is, itself, divisible into two distinct groups, one composed of "renters" and the other of "sharecroppers."

## A Return

A "renter" is a farmer who is "able to furnish himself"; that is to say, he owns a small equipment—teams, tools, machinery, etc.—and he pays rent in kind, a third of some crops and a fourth of others. Few pay cash rent. He must buy his supplies either with his own money or on his own credit. In nearly all cases, he must have credit and this he gets in very small amount and on hard terms from some local merchant or banker. But since the depression came many "renters" have been unable to secure credit from either the local merchant or the banker, and it is something of a mystery how they manage to carry on and "get by."

Many of these "renters," in fact, are being "stripped" of their meager equipment and forced into the lower class of "sharecroppers." Their living conditions are very bad, most of them, perhaps, going perpetually undernourished and diseased—certainly they go perpetually ragged and dirty and dejected despite the ministrations of the Red Cross, "Greatest Mother of them all."

A "sharecropper" is a farmer who owns no equipment whatever beyond his bare hands. The landlord furnishes teams, tools, etc., along with the land and advances supplies or credit. The "sharecropper" gets half of what he produces but, out of this one-half he

must pay for whatever supplies or credits have been furnished him, and, needless to say, at exorbitant rates.

The "sharecropper" is more numerous than the "renter," his economic status is lower, and his living conditions are worse. In fact, the condition of many of these unfortunates is wretched and pitiable in the extreme.

A majority of the "renters" rent from petty landlords who themselves go ragged in order to pay taxes on their lands and thus to remain in the home-owning, or the landlord, class. The renter-tenure prevails more in those parts of the State where the soil is comparatively poor. In the Delta regions, particularly, and along the river flood plains, generally, the land is owned by big landlords who regard their "sharecroppers" much as the feudal lords regarded their villeins, excepting, of course, that the more humiliating personal relationships incident to the ancient feudal tenure,—such, for example, as the "right" of the lord to sleep with his serf's bride the first night after the wedding—are absent. The exploitation of the "sharecropper" is, however, just as complete and just as callous as that perpetrated upon the feudal serf.

## Modern Feudalism

It is upon the cotton plantations that this modern survival of a barbaric system flourishes to a degree approximating its economic prototype; and since Arkansas ranks second among the Southern States in cotton production and since cotton constitutes 60 per cent of the total value of the agricultural products of the State, the magnitude of this survival from feudalism is seen to be vast. The preponderance of this modernized villenage falls upon the Negro "sharecropper" who, by frightful intimidation, has been forced to yield to its devastating exactions and, for the most part, to suffer in silence.

A clearer and at the same time a more comprehensive understanding of the general condition of the Arkansas farmer may be had from studying the following comparative statistics. These figures, I must admit, seem incredible and I shall take care, therefore, to give their source. Shortly before Mr. Hoover's "temporary" depression settled down upon us, South-

western Bell Telephone Company conducted a private survey of the economic conditions prevailing in Arkansas at that time, and in its mimeographed report, to which I have had access, these figures occur. The annual income per farm, as revealed by the Federal Farm Census for 1924-25, was, for Arkansas, \$851, whereas, for Oklahoma it was \$1,745, for Texas, \$1,965; for Kansas, \$2,479; and for North Dakota, \$3,402. Southwestern Bell quotes the following figures from the National Bureau of Economic Research: The per capita income in Arkansas (not restricted, however, to the farming population) was \$379, whereas, that for the United States at large was \$627. The per capita income of Arkansas farmers would fall much below the per capita income for the State at large. It is no wonder, then, that the same investigator, studying the Federal Census figures, found that the per capita wealth in Arkansas (again not restricted to the farming population) was \$1,394; whereas, for the country at large it was \$2,731.

When the disastrous condition of the farming industry throughout the country is considered, it becomes more shockingly apparent what the condition in Arkansas must be. It is no wonder, then, — despite the fact that the chartered Babbitts of the State have vociferously succeeded in getting Arkansas pet-named the "Wonder State"—it is no wonder, I say, that the figures giving the number of persons who, during the winter of 1930-31, had to be fed by the "Greatest Mother of us all" correspond almost exactly with the tenant-farming population of the State. And, in this connection, it should be remarked that the fact that it was precisely in those sections of the State where the soil is most fertile that practically the entire tenant-farming population had to be fed by the "G. M. of us all," is due to something more than a fortuitous ironical coincidence. It has its inexorable economic interpretation.

## Role of The Red Cross

That interpretation is simply this: In the immensely rich Delta region it has always been a profitable investment to own large blocks of land. The superior strength and methods of the larger landlords, who only could hold such valuable lands, enabled them to reduce the exploitation of the tenant to a perfect art. Where this had been



done, the tenant-farming population was kept stripped almost to its skin, and here, therefore, the "G. M. of us all" had to come, bringing her soup ladle, to forestall sheer starvation of thousands.

Illustrative examples: In Chicot County, the lowest in the Arkansas Delta region, and one of the most fertile in the United States, out of a total population of approximately 22,000, all but 751, according to figures published at the time, had to be fed by the Red Cross. In Polk County, where the shale-sandstone soil is too poor to attract the large landlord and where, therefore, the petty "grubber" is contemptuously permitted to "dig in"—here it became the proud boast of the local chamber of commerce that "Polk County could take care of her own."

(Since then, it may be added, the Menä—Polk County — chamber of commerce has quietly consented to a more thorough-going "nationalization" of the modern American Magna Mater.)

Despite, however, the wretched and weakened condition of the Arkansas farmer, his hereditary Democratic administrators have saddled him with the heaviest per capita State debt borne by any American citizen.

And yet, in the midst of his miserable plight, he is frequently told by the brazen little "economists," who speak for his despoilers, that his poverty was brought about by his excessive production of wealth. This would seem to make the irony of his situation complete.

### Still Bewildered

When we turn to observe his reaction to all this appalling and preposterous mess, a logical view of the case of the Arkansas farmer should seem to indicate a ferocious and fixed resentment against his plunderers, a resentment to be promptly followed by a resolute determination to rise in mass revolt and rid himself of the whole plunderbund.

But such is not in evidence. Instead, the typical Arkansas farmer presents a picture of whimpering bewilderment. Obviously, he is not yet aware that he has been systematically and deliberately tricked and betrayed by the whole clique of business and political leaders he has been trained for generations to trust and to follow blindly and implicitly. He is convinced, of course, that here and there a suave but grasping banker has foreclosed on him unnecessarily; that some trader into whose trap he had blundered has fleeced him to the bare skin; that the

government overtaxes him — though, maybe, with benevolent intentions—; and that certain public officials whom he had trusted have yielded to a universal temptation and made away with bulging bags of public funds. But the unending series of ruinously low prices he must take for everything he has to sell and the unending series of ruinously high prices he must pay for everything he has to buy—these he sees simply as isolated and unrelated transactions in a world where every man is naturally free to make, and to have enforced, whatever contracts he can.

### A Fatalist

The whole huge contract system of modern capitalism the Arkansas farmer accepts as natural, necessary, and immutable. Even while it ruins him, he accepts it with the same dumb and fatalistic passivity with which he accepts the physical universe and the occasional destructive forces—the tornadoes, blizzards, earthquakes, etc.—which that universe unleashes against him. He accepts the contract system of capitalism, and the logical and necessary appurtenances that go with it, because, in his mental situation he must—he can neither envisage nor imagine any other. Not yet.

Even when he attempts to apply logic to the economic situation—which, of course, he rarely does—he is likely to become more hopelessly enmeshed than ever. To him such steps as these seem simple and inevitable: If there were no business men to whom he could sell his surplus products and from whom he could buy the things he must have—if there were no employer to whom workers could go for a job—if there were no traders and traffickers to move commerce—if dealers could not extract profits for their time and *risk*—if, in short, the exchange of commodities, the extension of credits and the rendering of services were not allowed to continue, why, how in the name of Moses and the prophets could civilized life, or any other kind of life worth living, go on? And then—if he happens to be engaged in an argument with a radical—he laughs triumphantly and immoderately!

He assumes that civilized life depends on private contract—and his conception of the contract system coincides at all points with the capitalistic system.

He sees other men taking profits; collecting interest; collecting rents—all based upon and growing out of private contracts—and in quick consequence becoming fat, sleek, and ar-

rogant; surrounding themselves with all varieties of luxuries and indulging themselves with wine, women and song. He never sees men acquire these highly desirable things by common productive labor. Contract, then, is seen to be the magic key which unlocks all the gates to earthly paradise.

And thus the typical Arkansas farmer, in common with the overwhelming majority of his fellow-workers of America, still finds it infinitely easier to trust to luck and the most plausible and impressive political messiah than to break with the familiar and immemorial traditions and do original thinking along new and heretical lines. He still remains willing to follow the same old political Pied Pipers he has always followed, *even though a heavy majority of his fellow-farmers find themselves so thoroughly impoverished by the system for which these pipers pipe that they are disfranchised by the poll tax law.* (At least 65 per cent of the voting population of Arkansas could not vote in the recent election because they were too poor to pay a poll tax—yet thousands of these loyal and "unterrified" Democrats rushed pell-mell into the Democratic primary, thus taking chances on being sent to the penitentiary in order to vote for the system that has ruined them!)

It would be far pleasanter to report that the farmers of Arkansas are "seeing Red"; that they have developed an ineradicable and intransigent class consciousness; and so on to the ultimate conclusion. But a deep respect for the facts of the case compels me to report that few, very few, of the Arkansas farmers seem prepared to adopt such a course.

And yet there is certainly a considerable volume of "radical" sentiment among these farmers. For, despite the sparse vote cast for the radical party tickets—a sparseness to be attributed largely to the fact that perhaps three-fourths of the farmers of the State are disfranchised—it seems easy enough to get multitudes of them to join the Farmers' Holiday Association. This is true, at any rate, in the vicinity of Commonwealth College. (But this may be partly explained by the fact that the hedge parsons of the country have not yet had time to stigmatize the F. H. A. They will soon get around to the job, however, if that movement continues.) Possibly as soon as the incoming Democratic administration has had time to demonstrate its utter unwillingness, and incapacity, to save the farmers from their economic enemies.

# An A. F. of L. That Might Be

by J. B. S. Hardman

THE complaint of radicals against the existing American labor movement is not that dominant leadership has not set out to attempt the seemingly impossible but that it has failed to do what is obviously possible. A rounded-out, integrated and effective labor movement within the setting of American life is not an impossible Utopia. It is because no honest-to-goodness effort was ever made to unite various existing labor organizations into a powerful and a purposive labor movement that the forces of labor remain disjointed and are lacking in direction. The men at the helm of labor either never wanted a real movement, or did not want it strongly enough or did not feel the want long enough.

Undoubtedly there are serious obstacles in the way of labor organization in the United States, but they have not always, if ever, been insurmountable. It is not true, as it is often claimed, that native American workers are not responsive to the call of labor solidarity and action. Too much has been made of the would-be hard-boiled, individualistic nature of the American, of his Anglo-Saxon predilection for the practical and the immediate. Americans, all things being equal, do not differ essentially from other peoples. American workers, moreover, are not overwhelmingly Anglo-Saxon. The history of the railroaders, of the coal and copper miners, of the textile workers and the lumberjacks, belies the claim that labor in America would not see beyond a bird-in-the-hand.

In fact, American workers are spirited fighters when they see their enemy face to face. But they are not abstractly "class-conscious," and so it has been necessary, in order to arouse them to action, to correlate immediate issues with general objectives and to dramatize the social implications of the day-in-day-out routine of the business. That, the constituted leadership of the movement would not do. They abhor general objectives and larger goals. The Samsons of labor have been all too eager to shut their eyes so that tempting modern Delilas might successfully clip their wings and rob them of power. They would rather sit comfortably than take the risk of flying.

In the form of an imaginary report on the state of the American labor movement in 1938, an attempt is here

made to indicate just what we might have had instead of the present anaemic labor movement, had the leadership and the direction of the movement been different. The futurist projections in this report are based on relevant facts of American labor reality, past and present. Of all the factors and driving forces named in the report, imagination was drawn upon for but one: a leadership willing to face fight and ready to pay for victory, with the risk of temporary defeat.

*A paper read before the Labor Section of the American Economic Association*

In 1934 trade union membership, in and out of the A. F. of L., fell to two million, the lowest figure since the great war. The almost uninterrupted depression since late in 1929 was largely responsible for the dilapidated state of the trade union movement but even a greater source of weakness seemed to flow from the inability of most trade unions to adjust themselves to changing economic realities. That year, the A. F. of L. for the first time in fifty-two years, held no annual convention. A desire to avoid open discussion of certain delicate matters, rather than considerations of economy, prompted the decision. A convention was held in 1935. Many new faces were seen among the delegates and many familiar older people were absent. The last two days of the convention were mostly spent in executive session at which there was much fighting between two groups, each supporting a separate slate of candidates for the major offices of the Federation. Several old line leaders refused to stand for reelection and the new Executive Council was of unfamiliar political complexion. The convention adjourned amidst great uneasiness and rumors of impending secessions. A group of comparatively young men, not exactly radicals—not one of them would call himself a Socialist—found their way into the Executive Council. The older men stepped into the background. They were not strong enough politically to assert themselves. Developments in the course of that year marked a turn in the history of organized labor in the United States.

The Executive Council at its first

formal meeting authorized the appointment of a Labor Movement Research Bureau. The Bureau was to engage in studies of certain phases of the past of the movement but primarily to explore specific industrial situations. The Bureau was further empowered to form Labor Union Cooperating Committees, in various important industrial centers, to consist of leading economists, industrial engineers and representatives of various progressive and liberal movements. Simultaneously, Executive Council members were holding conferences with international officers and with officers of local central bodies in several important districts. Reports were current about significant organizing drives in the heavy industries. The rumored secessions of international unions did not prove true. In fact, in several industrial groups consolidations were accomplished. An opposition which was expected to assert itself in the next convention in 1936 failed to make an impressive appearance. In fact that convention was unusually constructive.

## The A. F. of L. Is Revamped

These are the highlights of the momentous 1936 convention:

1. One month before the convention, the Executive Council made public a series of recommendations which tended basically to reconstruct the trade union movement. All constituent unions received the resolutions and their reactions in the form of counter-proposals and amendments were issued in a supplementary report before the convention went into session.

2. The Labor Union Cooperating Committees met under the auspices of the Labor Movement Research Bureau the week-end preceding the convention. They received for consideration Special Report No. 1 which carried condensed summaries of the studies made under the auspices of the Bureau. Graphs and charts showed the relation of union membership in various trades and industries to the material resources, capital equipment and finances of these industries and trades. Maps pointed out the financial relationships between various industrial enterprises and banking institutions. There were also graphs made, showing how leading industrialists in certain cities were related to local politics, to reform movements, churches and to other business and social groups.

3. One section of Special Report

No. 1 explored the frame of mind of employers of labor in significant industrial conflicts. Much proof was submitted to show that in many important cases employers were bluffing about their determination to resist unionization at any cost and that only the ease with which labor "fell for" the bluff, turned possible victory in to unavoidable defeat. Next to lack of courage on the part of labor leaders, the report stressed lack of knowledge of the economic and the financial topography of strike situations as the cause of many industrial fatalities.

4. The convention was a complete triumph for the leading group in the Executive Council, the "initiating minority," as they had been dubbed by their supporters. A standing order was passed in the convention to the effect that no strike movement or organizing drive of national significance might be initiated without a preliminary and thoroughgoing survey of all economic, financial and political circumstances of the situation. Another decision called for an assessment to be levied on all members of the labor movement, the proceeds of which would constitute an Organization and Defense Fund. The Executive Council was authorized to reduce the number of international unions by one-half in the next two years. Each international union was to represent an entire industry with special departments for subdivisions of industry to take care of recognizable specific problems.

5. The above referred to preliminary conference of the Labor Union Cooperating Committees was a striking gathering of young and middle-aged men and women who considered their auxiliary service in the labor movement as a truly great venture. The conference went on record in favor of launching professional unions of workers in the intellectual occupations. The attitude of the participants in the gathering toward the labor movement as a whole was stated by one speaker:

We shall enter the economic labor movement as equals if we organize on the basis of our functional utility in the community. The movement recognizes people who do certain jobs, whether the execution of such jobs requires great skill, just ordinary common sense, or a special college training. The presidency of the Labor Federation is open to a man not because he is a workman but because he has made his way to leadership from the ranks of an organized branch of in-

dustry. He may be an electrician, a longshoreman or a common laborer. Likewise, in the future he might be an economist, a civil engineer or a newspaperman, but he will have to make his way to leadership from the ranks of the respective union of economists or civil engineers or newspaper writers. He will claim no distinction because he is an intellectual nor would he be disqualified because he is not a manual workman.

### Steel Is Organized

Industrial conditions improved slightly during 1937 and that furnished a favorable setting for the Federation's work. The progress made in the organization of the iron and steel industries was the outstanding achievement of 1937, although as was later disclosed activity was carried on during the whole of 1936. Of the over three million workers engaged in that group of basic industries only 28 per cent had been organized at the time of the Great War, by 1930 there remained in the field only the unions of highly skilled groups, comprising no more than 10 per cent of the workmen. The Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers, a shadow organization, with barely a couple of thousand scattered mechanics in the immense industrial area under its jurisdiction, was revamped into the International Association of Iron and Steel Workers. The other metal trades unions such as the machinists, the boilermakers, the metal polishers and others were made subdivisions of the new combine, with special executive leadership for each trade. The organization of the steel workers was achieved not without difficulty but without attempting a general strike as was the case in 1919. The following details of the campaign are excerpted from the report of the Executive Board of the International to the Federation:

1. Early in 1936 several hundred experienced metal workers, unionists of long standing, secured jobs in key positions in a number of important steel mills. They proceeded to utilize their acquaintance with many people who had taken part in the strike of 1919 and still cherished the thought of again having a union. Without much heralding or talking, organizations of all descriptions and kinds were formed in the company towns and settlements where the steel workers lived. These were mostly social clubs. Some were organized to carry on educational, lit-

erary and dramatic activities. A good many organized as sports and athletic groups and, where possible, they attempted to function as mutual aid, benefit and insurance societies. These organized groups did not federate in the districts or even in the same towns, though contacts were maintained by way of friendly contests, tournaments and sometimes community chest drives.

2. Since many steel workers were foreign born, wide and valuable contacts were established among them by utilizing the numerous fraternal organizations with which a great many of foreign born workers were affiliated. The German Sick Benefit and Death Insurance Society with fifty thousand members, the Lithuanian Literary Association with over ten thousand members, the Finnish cooperative movement, the Italian lodges and orders, the Hungarian, Czech, Polish and other national alliances, all of a generally progressive and pro-labor orientation, presented an enormous repository of accumulated energy, and they were easily drawn into the movement.

3. Early in 1937 the Federation's Bureau published an Illustrated Almanac under the title of *Men of Iron and Steel* which carried accounts of movements and persons in the past of the steel workers, written in the best style of Hendrick Van Loon, and illustrated by Art Young and others. Some twenty-odd illustrated post-cards were bound within the Almanac, detachable over a perforated line and usable for correspondence. Economic and industrial issues of the steel industry were presented on these cards graphically and in attractive colors. There were cards which carried cryptically written "lives" and the likeness of such real or legendary labor characters as Ira Steward, Frances Wright, John Swinton, Peter Altgeld, Albert Parsons, Mother Jones, E. V. Debs, as well as some of the bitterest labor baiters like H. C. Frick, Allan Pinkerton, William J. Burns, General C. J. Otis. The success of the cards and "lives" carried the Almanac to a circulation of 500,000 at the small selling price of twenty cents. The Federation simultaneously released and widely circulated a Report on the Nation's Metals, which presented in clear terms the results of investigation of industrial and working conditions in the steel mills.

4. One month before Independence Day, 1937, a call was issued by a number of individuals for a National conclave of all clubs, groups and societies in the iron, steel, and labor communities to meet at Niagara Falls.

A parcel of land was specially rented, tents were put up for temporary offices, benches and amplifiers erected for the holding of sessions in the open air, and the use of a neighboring church was secured for the emergency of inclement weather. Each society or club was asked to send delegates in proportion to their membership, but all members and their families were invited to attend. Game facilities were provided by arrangement with neighboring institutions and business enterprises, and prominent speakers were invited to address the gathering, among them John Dewey, Clarence Darrow and the president of the A. F. of L. Over 3,000 delegates and not less than 50,000 people answered the call. They came on trucks, flivvers, by boat and train from the steel centers of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, Wyoming, and points south. The event assumed the character of a mass exodus. The first day was given to games and addresses which were followed by a filmed story and a pageant of "All Nations in the Melting Pot," both features having produced an enormous impression on the crowds. In the morning session of the second day, following the labor president's brief but pointed address, a motion was made that the gathering declare itself a Committee of the Whole for the launching of an International Union of Iron and Steel Labor. Pandemonium broke loose. The crowd turned into a surging mass of enthusiastic humanity. Somebody read off a list of names to constitute the Provisional Executive Board of the Union-to-Be. Someone else was ready with a brief outline of a constitutional basis, which made of every group organization a direct unit of the International until a thoroughly constitutionalized body might be evolved. From somewhere there appeared a silk banner of unusual dimensions on which the letters Men of Iron and Steel appeared in burning red on a background of white. Without noticeable stage work or central direction the crowds turned into a solemn procession, falling behind the new union banner and the national colors, filing past, over and over again, the central platform upon which stood alone the president of the A. F. of L., a symbol of the oneness of all labor. There emerged out of this event the beginning of the International Association of Iron and Steel Workers of the United States, which soon comprised a membership of 400,000, including the older organized groups, and by the end of 1938 the number was nearly doubled.

5. The agitation was thrown into

the open, but no organization had to be sent into the steel centers. The steel workers who had enrolled in the clubs and societies, now local unions, proved that they needed no urging "to join." The unionized societies did not give up their previous activities; they continued their social and educational work and thus helped cement the solidarity of all the elements among the steel workers. No demands were made on the companies. In some cases, local management attempted to penalize participants in the new movement but the action did not seem to meet with approval from company headquarters. Confronted with what appeared as an irresistible elemental force, the companies were scared into accepting the inevitable. Their experts were estimating on the relative merits of a bad peace and a good war.

6. A test of strength was made on the issue of hours. The Executive Board of the Association made public a survey of the industry which attempted to show that a reduction by 20 per cent of the prevailing working week was not incompatible with maintenance of the output of the industry. The facts were mailed to the stockholders of the steel-producing companies, to people in the professions, to ministers of churches, to teachers and university people in the sections of the country where the steel industry was centered. They were asked to be fair to labor in their judgment of developments. The Association next requested the courtesy of a conference with the managements of the steel plant and other related enterprises through the offices of the Iron and Steel Institute. This was not refused but ten days ahead of the date set for the first conference the steel mills' administrations announced that "working hours would be reduced 15 per cent by the free will of the management and because of the findings of research laboratories of the industry and the technological progress made in recent years."

The conference resulted in an agreement further to study several matters, but it obviously was no longer a matter of dispute that steel labor was definitely on the upgrade.

### **Labor Sets Out for National Leadership**

The convention of the A. F. of L. meeting in 1938 made the most of the organization in the steel and iron industries. But it had another feather in its cap. Coal labor was once again organized. The new regime in the movement resuscitated the spirit of unionism among the coal-diggers. The

industrial depression had weeded out a good many weak mining enterprises and a substantial number of miners had drifted away from the pits. A national union agreement was again in force in the coal mining industry and working conditions were regulated by a national board consisting of operators, miners and representatives of the Division for Extraction of Minerals, of the President's Board on Production, Costs and Prices. The Oil and Gas Well Labor International Union was also represented in that arrangement because of the intricate industrial relationship between coal and oil. The convention of the Federation further received a report on the reorganization of the coal, lumber, oil and textile industries under a tripartite control of the federal government, labor and the investing public through the medium of a limited dividend stock corporation. The plan was based on the once famous Plumb Plan which had greatly agitated labor circles in the early 20's. The present plan was to be coordinated with the Federal Economic Planning Council, the organization of which the Progressive Party was forcing to a head in Congress.

Federation reports showed a growth of membership at a great pace. The four million mark was once again well in sight. The structure of the movement was compact, nearly all the reorganization plans promulgated in 1936 having been consummated. A feature of the convention which indirectly emphasized the mature status of the movement was the appearance on the platform of Tom Mooney and Warren Billings, celebrated California prisoners and labor martyrs. They were freed three days before the convention by the Governor of California, under strong pressure from Washington, after the Federation's Executive Council visited the Attorney General and urged in non-ambiguous terms that the case be finally and decently disposed of. Several new unions of the intellectual professions were represented in the Federation's convention. The old lonely union of teachers now had as comrades-in-arms, the university teachers, the newspapermen, several engineering unions, all of whom seemed to feel quite at home among bricklayers, tailors, sailors and photo-engravers.

As stated above, this 1938-Utopia is but a 1932-possibility. The X in the equation between 1932-reality and 1932-possibility stands for a determination to do things and a readiness to put in a day's work on the job, confidence in the rank-and-file, coupled

(Continued on page 29)

# Norwegian Labor Party and the Internationals

by G. Natvig Pedersen

**A**MONG the many radical Socialists that hailed the Russian Revolution with enthusiasm as the beginning of a new era in the struggle of the working class, was the majority of the Norwegian Labor Party. In fact, the complete breakdown of the Second International and the nationalistic attitude of the Socialist parties in the belligerent countries, together with the success of the Communist revolution in Russia, were the experiences that gave the revolutionary wing of the Norwegian Labor Party the leadership of the party in 1918. Members of the party had been represented at the unofficial discussions of radical Socialists from various countries that took place in Zimmerwald during the war.

When, after some futile attempts at bringing about an understanding between the scattered remnants of the Second International and the leaders of Communist Russia, the Third International was formed, the Norwegian party consequently joined it. The party had had a very rapid growth up until then. It had reached a membership of more than a hundred thousand, out of a population of about 2,700,000. It was a mass party, having the leadership of the great majority of organized labor and acting in close cooperation with the trade unions.

## In the Third International

It was not without serious consideration that the party decided to enter the Third International. The conditions of the new International were very rigid, purposely made so to discourage political bodies from joining if they were not sincerely prepared to take the leadership in the social revolution in their countries. The import of the Russian Revolution to the international labor movement was considered so immense that the rigid conditions were accepted. There was, however, an understanding that the structure of the party as a mass party and the democratic constitution should not be interfered with.

This understanding very soon brought about frictions with the Executive of the International. The highly centralized constitution of the International itself was very soon reflected in the other sections outside Soviet Russia, these being for the greater part minority groups that had broken away from Social-Democratic parties in the various countries. More and more the Executive of the Interna-

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*The author of this article is a prominent member of the Norwegian Labor Party and a leader of the workers' education movement in that country. He has been in residence at Brookwood for several months. Both because of contents of the article itself and because the Norwegian Labor Party holds much the same views as the CPLA, this is a very important and interesting contribution to Labor Age.*

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tional therefore stressed the need of the acceptance by all sections of the new Bolshevik party theory. Briefly, this theory meant that a Communist party could not be and should not even aim at being a mass party. In view of the immediate object of the Party to take the leadership in the social revolution a Communist party could consist only of sincere revolutionists. The relation between the Party and the working class was to be one of confidence rather than of organization. In the case of the Norwegian Labor Party it meant that the collective affiliation to the Party of a great number of trade unions had to be cut off. The Party would then have to build up its ranks again through individual membership.

The Norwegian Party was unable to accept this theory. It retorted that the command of the Party over the masses would be even better founded when a great part of the working class was brought inside the Party organization. It also maintained that this was a more fundamental way of educating the masses. This organizational disharmony between the Party and the International of course often reflected itself in the stand which the Party took on questions of tactics and principles. But in spite of this, and in spite of what was often felt to be irritating interference in mere internal Party matters, an open breach was avoided until 1923.

In that year the International issued three new theses, one stating that all party leaders must be declared atheists, another ordering the sections of the International to take control of the trade unions, the third pleaded that all sections should fight their election campaigns on the program of setting up a workers' and farmers' government.

All these theses were rejected by most branches when discussing the standing order of the national convention. Through the brilliant policy of Radek and Bucharin, who in turn came to Oslo and acted as mediators, the question was postponed by the Convention. When a new Convention met in the autumn that same year, the representative of the International, however, presented an ultimatum. This stated in effect that the Party was not supposed to discuss the order from Moscow. It was to accept the theses, and those who voted against would by so doing expell themselves from the Norwegian section of the International. In face of this ultimatum it was felt by the majority of the delegates that they had to choose between loyalty to the rank and file of the Party as expressed through their mandates, and enforced obedience to the International. Obedience at this hour would mean the wiping out of the democratic constitution of the Party, as the view of the majority would count for less than nothing whenever there was a disagreement with the International.

The Convention therefore proceeded to discuss the question, and the ultimatum was finally voted down. Then the representative of the International declared that the majority of the delegates had been expelled from the International, after which the minority were the only duly representatives of the Norwegian Labor Party section of the Third International. But as the minority could not throw out the majority, the former had to withdraw. After a futile attempt to conquer the party offices, they constituted themselves a new party, the Communist Party of Norway.

Some time before this split, the Right wing of the N. L. P. had seceded and formed a Social-Democratic party, affiliated to the Second International. From 1923 there were then three political parties all appealing to Labor for support. The devastating effects of such a situation were soon felt. None of the parties could keep up the organizational, educational, and propaganda activities which one party had formerly carried out. The interest in labor parties among the working class was declining due to the difficulty in choosing between three labor parties, although the majority still followed the Labor Party. Worst, however, were the effects on the trade unions. They from now on, were the constant battlefield of party struggles.

## Attempt at Unity

Realizing that all these circumstances only hampered the progress of the whole labor movement, the Labor Party in 1925 decided to make an earnest attempt at uniting the scattered forces. After preliminary private discussions an invitation was sent to the two other parties asking them to participate in a committee to examine the possibility of finding a basis of reunion. The only condition laid down was the necessity of effecting the union outside the Internationals. The Communist answer to this invitation was a proposal to set up a labor party on the British model, admitting for organized factions within the party with sufficient autonomy to keep up affiliation to one or the other of the Internationals. Such a loose organization would obviously mean the extension of the bitter struggle to the Party itself. For that reason it was rejected by the Labor Party.

The Social-Democratic Party on the other hand, with the understanding of the executive of the second International, declared itself willing to enter the reunion committee. An agreement was reached which was individually accepted also by some prominent leaders of the Communist Party. A reunion convention, representative of the two parties, some former adherents to the Communist Party, and the National Federation of Trade Unions, ratified the agreement and passed the constitution of the party, which still carried the old name, the Norwegian Labor Party.

The immediate result of the reunion was the awakening of interest in labor politics among the workers and the greatest election victory in the history of the party. After the general election of 1927, the party stood out as by far the greatest political party in the country with 59 seats out of the 150, while the Communists had lost 3 of their 6 seats, the rest being divided with 31 conservatives, 31 liberals, and 26 farmers. This created a completely new political constellation. The Conservative Government which had suffered the heaviest loss, resigned. Some sort of cooperation or coalition between the bourgeois parties was deemed necessary to meet the growing influence of labor. But the liberal party was unwilling to join a coalition government, feeling that an open coalition would eventually lead to the final absorption of the party in a conservative bloc.

Consequently the political crisis went on for days and weeks. Although

the executive of the Labor Party had officially stated that the party did not aim at office without a majority in the house, the King finally asked the parliamentary leader of Labor to form a government. The party executive now decided to accept the invitation and the first labor government was formed in January, 1928.

No sooner had the labor government been appointed than it was met—not by a parliamentary opposition—but by the power of the banks. One of the biggest private banks was on the point of breaking down. It had been kept up for some time by a concern of financiers. This financial aid being now withheld a run on the bank started just as the labor government took office. The crisis was officially attributed to lack of confidence in a labor government. The director of the national bank immediately approached the government with a measure for setting up a bank insurance fund through investments from all the banks. The fund was to be governed entirely by bankers, but it was found necessary that the labor government on behalf of the State should guarantee the money invested in this fund.

The government refused to be part of such a game. But it offered to introduce to parliament measures that would legalize such a fund provided it would be placed under control of a council appointed by parliament, and that the clause about State guarantee was dropped. As this was not acceptable to the national bank, the financial crisis continued.

Two weeks after its appointment the government, on behalf of the Norwegian Labor Party, presented to parliament the following declaration: "It is the object of the N. L. P. as expressed in its program to set up a socialist society in Norway. The government is, however, aware of the fact that the present division of power will not permit of a deep social change for the moment, but it has decided in all its actions to be led by the interests of the working class and of the whole class of producers and by the idea of facilitating and preparing the transition to a socialist commonwealth."

Then followed an enumeration of measures to be introduced to parliament, the most important of which were measures for disarmament, reduction of debt on small farmers and municipalities, raising money to fight unemployment, state monopoly over corn and wheat trade.

Such a declaration was of course unanimously attacked by the leaders

of all bourgeois parties. But not on the basis of the radical measures indicated. It was attacked because of the unusual opening phrases. They all agreed that it was impossible to have a government that officially stated it represented one class and one party.

During the debate of this "speech from the throne" the prime minister revealed the pressure that had been attempted from the side of the bankers. And it was shown that the bankers—after having been turned down by the government—had implored the parliament leaders of the bourgeois parties to get rid of the labor government as soon as possible. In spite of this revelation which made a deep impression on individual representatives who knew nothing of the whole affair, the party whips were set into action. One single member resisted the pressure. And the first labor government in Norway was turned down without having a chance to do—from the check on the bankers—more than to open the prisons for political prisoners. It was, however, a very sound lesson on the forces which a labor government will have to face if it aims at obtaining real power.

It also made the class distinction the outstanding features of party politics in Norway. At the next election the Labor Party had to face a fierce attack from a united front of the bourgeois parties. They pretended to defend religion and stop revolution. Yet, in spite of the wild passions that such slogans tended to arouse, were unable to check the progress of the Labor Party. The total number of votes for the party was slightly increased although some seats were lost, while the Communists lost their remaining seats.

During the last two years a reactionary farmers' government has been trying new tactics. It has announced a bill to enforce candidates, before the election, to declare their willingness to give an oath of loyalty to the constitution. It is attacking the popular vote with a view to disfranchising the unemployed. And it is planning to bring the leaders of Labor before the court for their anti-military propaganda, apparently hoping by this means to have the whole party declared illegal, as is the case with the Communist Party of Finland. The Labor Party, however, feels convinced that even if the government should succeed in its reactionary plans, it will only tend to arouse the revolutionary feelings of the working class and hasten the final struggle between capitalism and Socialism in Norway.



# A Psychologist's Notes on U. S. S. R.

by Pryn Hopkins

**W**E'VE just now returned from seeing the "night sanatorium" in Leningrad. Like so many other institutions, it is housed in the mansion of a once wealthy family. Working women having incipient tuberculosis are taken in here at the end of their day's work (5 p. m.), given a bath, dinner, walk in the garden, supper and sleep. The nurse explained that here indeed they believed in open windows. But they had to compromise because so many patients were afraid of it!

On Sunday morning I went to the Russian church which stands opposite our hotel. The service was very beautiful and fairly well attended. This church was full of icons of considerable value. Other members of the party attended other church services, which go on without any of the alleged persecution wherever there are enough people to make it worth while.

We spent most of the day at what used to be called Tsarskoe Seloe, and is now called the Children's Village. The big villas there, which formerly belonged to officials and the aristocracy, have been made into homes for waifs or sanatoria for children needing to be sent out of town. We strolled into one of them and found it managed on modern lines as regards regime, etc., and extremely clean.

## Youth and Cleanliness

In fact, we have been struck by the extreme cleanliness of all the institutions we have visited, in spite of their neglectful external appearance. A general rule of communism seems to be, the care of essentials and neglect of externals.

It also is certain that their treatment of children is the most marked success of the new Russia. All children seem to be happy. Except for a small number of beggar brats who have managed to elude their care, it seems as though there were hardly a neglected child in the country.

It appears to be a country for youth preeminently. The people in charge of things are all fairly young. And among the tourists the same is true—loads of college students are here on tours from Europe and America. Some of them are away from their parents for almost the first time. They are having the time of their lives seeing and experiencing and debating. It is a much better atmosphere for them than that of the Riviera with its sophistication.

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*Pryn Hopkins teaches psychology in University College, University of London. With a group of other psychologists he made a tour of Russia last August. The following article consists of extracts from the very interesting letters which Doctor Hopkins wrote back from the U. S. S. R. while on this tour.*

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## Lenin's Tomb and the Park of Culture and Rest

We saw and entered the tomb of Lenin. It is in the largest (and a truly magnificent) square of Moscow, the Red Square. It is just under the walls of the Kremlin. Very severe and simple in line, it admirably expresses the character of the national hero. On it for once the Communists have spent lavishly, for it is of the most beautiful stones, highly polished. An army of pilgrims pours into and out of it continuously. It's a wonder all of them get out alive for there's no ventilation!

The last thing we visited on Monday was the Park of Culture and Rest. This is a huge recreation ground bordering on the river and having facilities for boating and swimming as well as varied land amusements. All these facilities were being much appreciated. Thousands of people were there. A typical Communist touch was given by the posters everywhere. Some encouraged the people to keep themselves in health. Others held out promise of further development of the park, etc. Still others lampooned the enemies of the regime. Among the last were exceedingly clever effigies of certain foreign statesmen, etc.

This park represents the sort of thing the regime is doing for the people. They really are wonderful in their public services of all kinds.

The two things which most interested us in the park were the museum of modern painting and some folk dancing. This last was participated in by hundreds of young people. They were led by leaders of about college age. The dances of each circle were followed in some cases by community singing. At the end, names were taken of those present who liked it well enough so they would like to be trained as leaders themselves.

## Economics and Psychology

Yesterday, Tuesday, we started with the Psychotechnical Institute. Here we were received by several well known psychologists. Most of the talking was done by its head, Prof. Kolbanovsky. He was translated by a physiologist, Prof. Borovsky. Prof. Kornilov, who bases his psychology on Karl Marx, stood by but only spoke when I questioned him personally. (I act as chairman of the group). It is extraordinary to find economics being made the foundation of psychology and other sciences.

Prof. Teplov then showed us some very fine apparatus for the study of vision. The laboratory is extremely well equipped and there is a good psychological library attached. There are 14 on the staff. They have 80 graduate students and once had 100. Most of the work is in the field of industrial relations.

It would be difficult not to catch the enthusiasm of things. Therein undoubtedly lies much of the power of communism. It has in many ways taken over the power once wielded by evangelical religion, and is a very great social regenerative force.

For instance, on someone's advice, I brought over as gifts a lot of articles difficult to get here, such as fountain pens, cakes of soap, packages of aspirin, etc. But thus far I've found it almost impossible to get anyone to accept a gift! Workers are too proud to accept tips.

Again, on the train from Leningrad my room-mate was an engineer. He had had years of experience in the employ of private firms. But he said though he might earn more by returning to them he would not do so. First, because it went against the grain to employ men whose jobs were so precarious and social needs so little cared for as in capitalist countries. Second, because in those countries one has the trade unions working against one whereas in Russia they are helpful.

## A Soviet Factory

We went to the big factory for farm machinery—every kind except tractors, to the number of 800 daily. They employ 17,000 people. Seventy-five to eighty-five per cent of them take part in social activities connected with the factory, I believe. Beginning with the foundry, we went through the whole works to where they turned out the



combined harvesting and threshing machines, of which they are justly proud.

It was, if possible, even more inspiring than the plant at Stalingrad (34,000 employes) had been. For here we saw them uncrating and installing in huge new halls the latest reamers and other machines just received from Germany, U. S. A., or in a few cases from England. Everyone seemed to work with enthusiasm. A large number of the machinists were women.

The factory is made the centre of an elaborate social plan for the workers.

First we went through the model dwellings erected for them. Of these, the older ones were in small houses—the new, in large apartment houses. While built on modern lines, there was nothing here which could not be duplicated elsewhere, except the large-scale on which the attempt is being made to provide decent lodging for every worker in the republic. The building program is still so far behind the requirements of population that each flat intended eventually to house a single family, is for the time being made to do duty for several.

We selected at random a few dwellings, knocked on the door, and asked permission to look in. This always was granted, with that friendly hospitality which we met everywhere. Although housewives, as is their custom, apologized for not having tidied up their quarters to receive visitors, we found them always clean and respectable even where several persons had to occupy one room, or three families had to use the common kitchen and bath.

We then went through a club for the employees. Anyone can join who shows his card proving that he is employed locally. (There are, of course, no private employers). This large building contained a big gymnasium, a large and small theatre, and many other rooms, especially rooms for workers' associations of all kinds. Among the most interesting of the latter are "Agitation Societies." Asked what they agitated for, some of their stickers were read off to us. A typical one was to enthuse the factory workers for the Government plea that everyone should do some truck gardening or pig raising.

We saw the most delightful things

when we dropped in on a little kindergarten for the local apartment. When the women go to their work in the morning practically all of them park their children under four at the creche, and those four to seven at the kindergarten. Children seven to fifteen attend the "7 year school" which is the backbone of the Soviet educational system. After that they may at choice go on to a technical high school or college and finally a technical institute.

When we entered this kindergarten



Children at Work in Industrial School of Soviet Union

we at first saw only empty rooms, though with bits of apparatus or children's work and with drawings on the walls which indicated that it was run along modern lines. Then our prowling brought us to the dining room. Our nostrils were greeted with an aroma of savoury cooking, and our eyes with the sight of 75 little brown bodies seated at their small tables, all "tucking in." In summer time nearly all the small children in Russia go about naked except for an abbreviated garment about their middle — a most wholesome as well as economical idea.

The luncheon consisted of a vegetable soup followed by barley with compote of fruit. I had some of each and found them more delectably prepared than anything which had been given us. Certainly one never saw a healthier looking "bunch of kids," or happier. It was also interesting to see how orderly they were, though with no suspicion of constraint. When we departed some of them followed us out and asked if we would come again next day.

### A Farm Collective

Just as we were starting off elsewhere (6 p. m.) the Lincoln from the farm returned. As soon as the chauffeur

could have a bit to eat we started back with him. It was our first chance of seeing the Russian countryside except from a train window. The bigness of it all impresses one. One rolls past beautiful pine forests, interspersed with meadows, rivers, grazing lands and extensive farms. Seldom does one see houses and never fences, hedges, ditches or any bill board. You can imagine what a difference this makes. The whole region being owned by the people in common, there is nobody to fence off from anybody else. The people manufacturing the only permissible goods for themselves, there is no sense in advertising it to themselves.

At last we reached the farm. It has 15,000 hectares or very roughly 30,000 acres. Ninety-seven per cent of the people in the village, or 13,500 men, women and children live on it. All over 18 years meet about once in two years and elect a soviet of nine. This soviet selects a manager. This manager or chairman showed us around.

Similarly the village independently organizes.

This farm goes in mainly for producing milk, vegetables and fruit. They showed us their herd of cows and five bulls. They also have 100 horses and 25 colts. We were taken all around the place, shown orchards, 100 odd beehives, etc.

Wages vary according to the skill of the workers, but any willing person is given employment. Social pressure is the chief corrective against laziness. But the wages paid during the year are small, and the main payment is made at the end of the year when the profits thereof are computed. All profits are collective, not individual, of course.

Each peasant is allowed 12 hectare of land for his private kitchen garden. Also not exceeding 3 cows and a few pigs should he wish them. But becoming a kulak (a rich private proprietor) is discouraged by social pressure or ultimately by confiscation.

There is a hospital with 30 beds and a staff of about a dozen doctors and nurses and dentists. Their services are available on showing one's working card.

Just as in the case of a factory,



**Children at Work in Industrial School of Soviet Union**

when the women go to work in the morning, they leave their children in the creche, kindergarten or 7 year school. We visited these. Creche accommodates 25. Kindergarten 75. A new school building was under course of construction. The manager said the new (schooled) generation made more intelligent farmers than the old. Twenty-five graduates have started going to the technical school in Kiev. Ten will become civil engineers, four teachers and the rest will return to the farm. He himself was taking technical courses in his spare time.

The adults of the farm are keen on evening classes. They arrange with the government to supply teachers for these, mostly on agricultural technique.

### Marriage and Divorce

We were scheduled next to visit the Kremlin. But they had decided this day they would not open it until afternoon—there was no fixed hour for every day.

So we went to the registry office for marriages and divorces. To marry, both parties simply come and fill out forms stating they are over 18 and free from venereal disease, etc. False statements entail three months imprisonment.

For divorce, either party alone is sufficient. A post-card is sent to the other stating that he or she is divorced. At that, it may be better than the way such things are managed in Paris, and what shall we say England? The father must support any children till they are 16. The court decides who shall have charge of them.

By the way, we are all struck by the absence of any apparent interest in sex. The women don't bother much about their own appearance (and of course cosmetics and perfumes are with difficulty to be obtained). The women of our party complain that none of the Russian men take any interest in them on the street. Even in an amusement park on a warm evening one sees no flirtation going on. It is frowned on as a distraction from life's true interest, the getting on with economic reconstruction of the country. We met also with other signs of the ascetic nature of Communism.

Then we went to a law court, just dropping in at hazard. A woman was being tried for having stolen a dress from another woman. A young working-class judge questioned both of them personally. On his right and left sat one representative each of their factories or unions or something. These three would give judgment to-

gether. In this court, there seemed to be no hired council nor unions.

From the court we went to the Prophyllactorium, or place where they care for prostitutes and endeavor to redeem them. In 1913 there were 20,000 of these women registered in Moscow. Now there are 400 being cared for in this home and there are believed to be only 600 others at large in the Moscow district. They are not handled by the police but by social workers. Many come of their own accord. The attitude is no longer a moralistic one toward them but an offer to help medically. While under treatment they go out to their factories from 8 a. m. till 4 p. m. To avoid social stigma they are not sent all together, but scattered.

As most of them in old times were peasant girls who got stranded in the city, the economic remedy supplied by Communism, which makes every citizen work, was mostly sufficient. Its elimination of the wealthy men who could patronize them and its ascetic religious-like zeal helped too.

### A Soviet Prison

I think the next thing we visited was a prison. It was an old-style building on the plan of radiating spokes and dating from Tzarist times. However, the regime was changed. The armed guard (not counting as such a few officials who wore a pistol as part of their uniform) were reduced to two—one at the entrance and one at the exit. For the rest, the men elected their own foreman.

We visited the cells. The men had been allowed to decorate them with posters, etc. Every cell had a wireless!

In this prison are 600 men serving terms of from 1 to 3 years. When they come 20 per cent of them are illiterate. All such are encouraged to go to school. For this they get a remittance of time.

Part of the old prison has been turned into a spinning mill. Here the men are taught a trade and also earn money to support themselves and their dependents. Everything is done to retain their self-respect. The tone is not moralistic but educational.

We saw a poster outside announcing that next day there was to be an excursion and that relatives were invited to come along. When a third of his term is served the prisoner is allowed as holiday a week of liberty. When two-thirds is served he gets two weeks.

In ignorance of a prohibition to the contrary, I took a snapshot in the prison. The penalty for that was that my film should be taken from me and the illegal picture be destroyed. I said that this would be a great hardship as the remainder of that film was all I had left for the remainder of my stay in Russia, it being impossible to buy another. The matter being brought to the warden, I told him I would make it a matter of honour to return the picture to him if he would let me keep it for the time being. To my surprise, the warden apologized for the unpleasantness I had been caused, said that the reason they objected to photography was that people would think that Bolsheviks still build prisons like the present one, and he only hoped that if I wrote anything about the prison I would mention the efforts they were making to improve it.

### *The Librarians' Division of the Ass'n of Unemployed College Alumni Ventures Beyond New York City*

When the Librarians' Division was formed it was most emphatically stated by the Chairman of the division that it would confine itself to work in and around New York City, but from the first unemployed librarians elsewhere have shown an interest in the Librarians' Division. At first, an attempt was made to discourage these outsiders, unemployed librarians from Detroit, Chicago, etc., but now it is realized that these outsiders are valuable. In the first place, they have shown themselves very willing to tell us of the situation in the library world in their locality; they have given us names and addresses of other unemployed librarians, also, of people whom they have felt would further our cause. In many instances, they have been willing to help us apply pressure on individuals, and situations where we have felt that we wanted to apply such pressure. Finally, we believe that through the efforts of these outsiders unemployed librarians in certain localities will be organized. In fact, so important have these outsiders become, that if any additional funds were available at this moment for the Librarians' Division, the Chairman would recommend that they be spent in building up the membership outside of New York City.

JULIA NELSON.

# Glimpses at CPLA Activities

**D**URING the past month CPLA activities have broadened in the three particular fields in which we have been working: 1. The war on labor racketeering, in which the CPLA is the chief national labor group doing effective work; 2. The organization of the unemployed, and 3. Industrial organization campaigns.

We are cooperating in pressing forward the advantages gained for the rank and file members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, particularly in Local 3. The fight for freedom of expression in the union has led to complete victory. This is now being followed up by opposition to the administration's reactionary policies. The meeting of December 22 indicated an intelligent revolt in the ranks of Local 3, not seen in years.

In the International Union of Operating and Hoisting Engineers, the iron workers international union, the motion picture operators union and other bodies, the CPLA has become the center of cooperation with membership groups seeking to correct the abuses in these unions.

The National Executive Committee has placed the responsibility for cleaning up the A. F. of L. unions squarely before President William Green through two documents: 1. The bill of particulars, filed with the Executive Council of the A. F. of L. at the opening of the Cincinnati convention; and, 2. The statement of charges, demanding the suspension of the International Union of Operating and Hoisting Engineers until its president, John Possehl, can be removed and the union reorganized.

## Arnold Johnson in Ohio

Arnold Johnson, whose arrest in Harlan last year received national attention, has been appointed CPLA representative in Ohio, to cooperate in the growing unemployment organization work there. He has been immediately called upon to aid in the injunction case against V. C. Bauhof and five others and also in the preparations for the state convention of the Ohio Unemployed League. With William R. Truax, he is now making a tour of Ohio cities to extend the League's organization contacts.

The Pittsburgh Unemployed Citizen's League, through Elmer Cope, reports four branches established, one of them at East Liberty, Pa. Police attempts to interfere with the East Liberty meeting led to the arrest of one of the members of that organization. The Pittsburgh U.C.L. continues to issue its national information bulletin for unemployed organizations, edited by Ernest Rice McKinney and Margaret Rodgers.

## Karl Lore in St. Louis

Through the efforts of Karl Lore and St. Louis branch of the CPLA, the St. Louis U.C.L. has been reorganized, with a view to more militant and effective action. Lore was elected to the Executive Committee of the Mid-Western Unemployment Conference, and has also launched an industrial organization campaign in the St. Louis packing house district, with the aid of David T. Burbank and the St. Louis branch.

Interest in the Progressive Miners' movement has led to the establishment of a CPLA branch at Pana, Illinois, and the request for organization of branches in other cities of that state. The latter requests have been taken under consideration by the N.E.C., as they involve a wider mass affiliation than our present organizational structure allows. Belmont County, Ohio, and Lawrence, Mass., have also established branches.

## In West Virginia

The CPLA organization has grown in West Virginia, where we continue our cooperation with the West Virginia Miners' Union and the Independent Labor Party. Tom Tippet has just returned from a stay in West Virginia, working with Keeney, Scott, Scherer, and the others in the strike situation there, and for the defense of the union miners framed up on murder charges.

Secretary Budenz was called into the butchers' strike in Paterson, N. J., by General Organizer Herman Gund of the Amalgamated Food Workers. Budenz was arrested, along with Organizer W. Montross, but both were acquitted by Judge Joelson, who reprimanded the guards employed by the company.

## The N. Y. C. Branch

The New York branch has continued its interest in the Brooklyn Edison campaign, and has secured speakers from outside the CPLA ranks for the mass meetings in that fight. Among those who have spoken at the meetings are: Paul Blanchard, Secretary, City Affairs Committee; J. B. Matthews, Secretary, Fellowship of Reconciliation; Paul Porter, Representative, League for Industrial Democracy; and John Herring and Walter E. Peck, of the League for Independent Political Action.

At a special conference with representatives of the Ohio Unemployment League, held as we go to press, the N.E.C. agreed to put four national representatives of the CPLA into Ohio during the months of January or February, to aid in the drive there, leading up to the state convention.

## Report from N. Y. Branch Relief Committee

At Tom Tippet's meeting \$16.85 was raised for the Illinois miners.

The Subway Squad cooperated with other youth organizations in the city and raised \$20 for the Progressive Miners of Illinois.

Clothes continue to come in, but West Virginia, Paterson and Illinois are more than ever in need of clothes and money.

Suggestions and help from members for reaching groups and individuals with appeals are always welcomed by the Relief Committee.

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# The Struggle for Unity in the French Movement

In the United States, where less than two per cent of the national vote is cast for proletarian parties, where only a tiny fraction of the working-class is organized industrially, and where there is no sport, cooperative or cultural movement worth mentioning, the matter of labor unity appears to many workers to be merely a social myth or sentimental catch phrase.

In France, however, there are two large trade union centers and a well developed cooperative movement, and the working-class parties have almost a majority in the Chamber of Deputies. Workers who see one mandate after another lost to the class enemy because the workers' vote is split three, four or five ways are faced with a concrete problem. And, in a larger way, the realization that the French proletariat is sufficiently developed and organized to seize and hold power if it move unitedly, makes unity of the labor movement a question of major and immediate importance. For this reason, the Party of Proletarian Unity, whose position is roughly analogous to that of CPLA, raises as its central slogan, "Unity of the Revolutionary Labor Movement."

The P.U.P. has recently made a bold initiative which caused a furor in European labor circles, and is worth mention in LABOR AGE. After a thorough discussion within the P.U.P., the Central Committee addressed an open letter to the Central Committee of the Socialist and Communist Parties and to certain independent groups urging them to send delegates to an open conference at which each group would outline its theoretical position and the minimum pro-

gram on which it would be willing to unite with the others. In this way, it was felt, some clarification might be achieved, and the way prepared for class unity in the not too distant future on the basis of a minimum revolutionary program. The open letter was issued as a poster and distributed throughout France, and, needless to say, caused a great deal of discussion within the other organizations.

The Socialist Party, like its brother party in Germany, which, when asked by the Communists to form joint anti-fascist defense squads agreed on condition that the C.P. refrain from all criticism of the Socialists in the future, accepted the invitation to the conference, on condition that all participating groups agree to refrain from future criticism of Socialist theory and practice. It must be said, that this acceptance, which was tantamount to a refusal, was not the sentiment of all groups in the S.P. Many party organs condemned it, and urged instead an honest cooperation. On the other hand, some elements proposed not to answer the letter at all.

The Communist Party on the other hand replied that the conference was useless and unnecessary; useless because every honest worker had already seen the superiority of Communist theory and practice, and unnecessary because unity was already accomplished through the committees against war formed by the Amsterdam Congress Against War of Barbusse and Rolland. It generously offered, however, to supply a speaker to any mass meetings arranged by the other parties if the speaker were given full liberty of speech.

The leaders of both the Socialist and Communist Parties have not been slow in making known their hostility to the Pupiste proposal, but it is easy to perceive that the rank and file have shown a great deal of interest in it. All independent labor papers including such well known publications as Henri Barbusse's "Monde" have discussed the proposition, and the leaders of the two large parties who would no doubt have preferred to bury the matter in silence have thought it well to defend their positions at great length. In addition, the circulation of "L'Unite," central organ of the P.U.P., has taken a sudden rise. There is still a long way to go, but unity is on the march.

LARRY COHEN.

## To Form Progressive Federation of Labor

### To All Local Unions and Organized Crafts

Greetings:

We are writing you at this time because of the great dissatisfaction that is rampant among the membership of the American Federation of Labor, through the failure of that organization to fully protect the membership in the way that it should. There is no doubt in our minds that the members of the various bodies in your locality are of the same mind, therefore, we are suggesting the following:

That a conference be called for the purpose of finding the correct status of the various branches of the Organization relative to the mind of the membership formulating a New Progressive Federation of Labor, displacing the old and practically defunct American Federation of Labor.

We believe that such action would not only gain much prestige through throwing off the burden of the autocratic leadership that has been foisted on the membership for the past many years, but would bring forth new leaders, and those that would put forth every effort to protect the membership of the new organization in the way of establishing and maintaining a living wage, and one under which the workers would cease to be wage slaves.

We have had many requests for such a conference, and so we are asking that you select duly accredited representatives of your local organization, and send them to a conference that has been called for Tuesday night, December 27, in Gillespie, Illinois. The meeting will be called to order at 7:00 o'clock p. m. in the Colonial Theatre.

Hoping that your Organization will be represented at this meeting, and that we will meet you in the conference, we wish to remain

Fraternally yours,

GILLESPIE TRADES AND LABOR  
COUNCIL,

J. C. Walker, Pres.

Andrew S. McFarlane, Vice-Pres.

O. W. Smith, Sec.

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# News From Workers . . .

## *Are We in A Revolutionary Crisis?*

Dear Comrade:

I have read the N.E.C. report you kindly forwarded me, and as you asked for it, here is my general reaction to it.

My impression is that the report flounders a bit in the summary of the present situation in the U.S. and in the world, as to the state of Capitalism. In the early part of this summary it is stated that capitalist economy may experience a temporary revival through the application of stimulants.

I find grievous fault with that statement—not because it makes the assertion that capitalist economy may experience a revival—though I differ with that—but because the statement makes no assertion that capitalism will, or will not, experience a revival. That is floundering. At this stage of acute crisis of the present order, more is expected of a revolutionary party than an appraisal of that sort, a statement of probabilities over time and space. Now, it is mighty important for a party—an organization—a conference—the CPLA to have a more definite notion than what the report discloses, as to the probable course of economic forces in the immediate future. I think it will matter a great deal in the program of work the report outlines whether capitalism is going soon to experience a revival or not; and how long is temporary? I consider it absurd to draw up a blue print chart—an exact plan so many yards and so many inches in dealing with social and economic forces that include among its important ingredients, the plastic human element—yet it is just as much a folly not to commit one's self at all on such a paramount question as to whether this is the crisis of capitalism or not.

In a former letter I intimated that we have reached such a stage in the development of things that to plan to "bolster up unions, etc.," was evolutionary and Socialistic. I may be wrong. It may well be that this is not the crucial crisis of capitalism. If it isn't then it may be all right to inject progressivism in the present unions, to concentrate on that and other preparatory work. I start from the premise that a realistic policy of a revolutionary outfit must be attuned to the times being traversed, and to the times ahead of us. If capitalist economy is in for a revival, I take it that the danger of Fascism—I mean open definite barefaced general Fascism in the U. S. is remote. History teaches us that Fascism

has sprung up in Italy, Hungary, Spain, Finland, etc., at a time of general breakdown of bourgeois economics. But if there is to be no revival of capitalism then the danger of Fascism is immediate and the CPLA must concentrate its forces in the integrating work of Labor Unity to defeat Fascism.

Perhaps I have gone on too long to make my point lucid and have (as often happens) thereby beclouded it. What I mean, concisely, is that the N.E.C. report should have taken the risk of being wrong perhaps—but should definitely have established in its judgment, the trend of the present crisis and arrange or direct its particular activities on the basis of its estimate of developments.

Another thing. To state that the CPLA will cooperate in every phase of the movement industrial, political, educational and co-operative is mere generalizing. There is always one thing more important than another to be done—and a small group of people, no matter how energetic, should not spread themselves everywhere.

For instance, right now I think it is more important to organize the unemployed than to organize the miners in West Virginia or textile workers of the South or any industrial group. In fact I think it is damned erroneous to bother about organizing workers that are on the job now—for several reasons. First and foremost, the organization of the unemployed carries with it a profound political implication that the organizing of the miners does not. Secondly, it is very difficult to win strikes at this time. But of course if there is going to be a revival—then the unemployed are not very important—they will soon be at work. My judgment is, however, that all the stimulants applicable to capitalist economy can do is to reduce the speed of its descent for a time. There is going to be no revival. We are in for it. We might as well prepare for the worst, and concentrate and unify all labor forces, and take the aggressive. From now on it's going to be tough—the class struggle is going to be ugly in these United States. How we will come out depends upon—in addition to the many unseen circumstances—how well we realize the situation and how realistically we handle ourselves.

However, I am pretty well satisfied that the CPLA is a fairly well balanced outfit that seeks to serve the future and is already avoiding the errors of the CP and SP in its approach to the arena of social conflict. I hope that it does not

try to balance itself too much—and that it will not fear too much to err. It is not so terrible to err a little.

A. R.

## *A Student Writes*

Dear Comrades:

Let me introduce myself, I am a college student, sophomore, and have been a member of the Y.P.S.L. and the S.P. for quite sometime. In fact I was a delegate to the last National Convention of the Y.P.S.L. held in this city. So you see, I am not a novice in the ranks.

I am writing to you because I find that the S.P. and Y.P.S.L. do not offer, to me at least, the way out. I resigned from those organizations, bitterly disappointed. I'm looking for an organization now which is really striving towards Socialism without shilly-shallying and without trying to dress up in a fresh coat, the way the S.P. is doing today.

I know a little about the CPLA; but I would like to find out more about its workings and aims. It seems to me, that the CPLA is the organization that really means to work sanely and logically towards Socialism.

I would like to find out whether I can become a member of this organization. You see, I'm studying for a profession, either medicine or teaching biology in some college, and from what I know of the CPLA, it is composed of hand workers.

While I was in the S.P. and the Y.P.S.L. I did some stump speaking and was considered one of the best speakers. (We only had about 6 or 7 speakers and 4 were considered "one of the best"). So you see that in the event of my becoming a CPLA-er I may be able to do some work.

F. SPENCER.

## *Action! Our Watchword*

Dear Comrades:

The Commonwealth Branch of the CPLA has started off with a bang! "Action" is our watchword. Among our accomplishments so far are:

1. We have secured a non-factional, united front on all college activities in Polk County, the region which serves as the "laboratory" for Commonwealth students. The college has organized community forums, farm groups (Farm Holiday Association), and youth groups throughout the country. When factional squabbles threatened to disrupt the progress of this work, the CPLA was instrumental in securing a united front.

Practically every member of our branch participates in one or more of these community projects.

2. We have been carrying on educational work with the coal miners of Arkansas. This work has been handicapped somewhat by lack of funds and transportation facilities. However, we have kept in touch with the miners and plan to meet with several groups again on Sunday, November 27th. The coal region is about sixty miles from Mena.

3. We publish "Unity," a bi-weekly wall newspaper similar to those so popular in Russian schools. In conjunction with this newspaper is a large map of the U. S. upon which the most important current labor struggles are shown. Colored ribbons lead from the points on the map to explain the indicated hot spots.

4. We also carry on definite education work. At each meeting some phase of the CPLA philosophy or activity is analyzed and discussed so that students when they leave here, will be prepared to function efficiently for the CPLA in their respective communities.

It is encouraging to hear of the rapid growth of the CPLA in other parts of the country. We eagerly await the first issue of "Labor Action."

BILL REICH.

### *The Anthracite Convention*

Dear Brothers:

The miners convention of District No. 9 ended after being in session ten days. It was the worst steamrolled convention that was ever held in these regions. The delegation was packed. Opposition delegates representing 70 to 80 votes were not seated. (This would have given the anti-administration a majority). Time and time again rules were suspended and delegates were sent home only to return the following day to start the battle all over again.

The opposition put up a wonderful fight. The Administration, excepting one district board member, were re-elected to office. Fred Blase opposition candidate for president, I believe is going to carry his fight to the courts. A few times during the convention some of the delegates raised the cry of going out and holding a convention of their own, but they were persuaded by the more conservative members to stick it out so they could get their evidence in the records in order to go to court in a more prepared manner. The fight I believe is just starting. What the outcome of it is we do not know as yet.

C. J.

Mt. Carmel, Pa.

### *U. M. W. A. Hopeless*

Dear Friends:

There are 18 of the 28 collieries working now so that means that a certain lull has come over the entire district. It is this thing that makes the anthracite people so darn inactive. They stay idle a long time but always with a hope that the mines will reopen and it generally works out that mines do not reopen.

I attended the convention but not as a delegate. It was a farce as far as I could see. J. L. Lewis tactics ruled. The opposition fought valiantly but they were doomed to die. You know Lewis' methods at a convention is his own made rules and order. This is never fought by the opposition so that when the rules of the convention are adopted the opposition (unless it is a majority) is automatically licked.

However, a few Communists and our gang drew up some resolutions and had friends introduce them and a number of them were passed in a modified form.

I am distributing the "Progressive Miner" every week and trying to undermine the morale of the U.M.W.A. in this section. I'm through with trying to make a fighting union out of the U.M.W.A.

Blase and the whole opposition were defeated; either crooked or straight, but they lost out. Only one insurgent was elected and that was in Shenandoah where the board member didn't get nominated. Ray Kendrick from Shaft, Pa., won out as board member from the Shenandoah sub-district. The general mine board of Shenandoah along with the Labor College can easily claim the credit for this upheaval.

D. M.

Shenandoah, Pa.

### *Labor Party Sentiment Growing*

Dear Comrades:

I have received the commission to act as a voluntary organizer for the CPLA and enclose my first report:

Alleghany, California is an isolated mining camp up in the mountains and we have very little contact with the 'outside world' and the work here must be one of slow building of local and county contacts.

Agitation for a Labor Party has developed some success and in the presidential election we centered on the Socialist Party and polled Thomas 21 votes as against none in 1928. The vote stood Roosevelt 82, Hoover 19, Thomas 21. We propose to develop an educational organization to aid in building a Farmer-Labor Party on Socialist principles.

18 American Guardians, 8 Freemans and 6 Labor Ages are read in the camp.

November has been an extremely busy month for those gathering wood, etc., but, by the 15th, we hope to begin our educational work and will report later.

There are no trade unions in the county (Sierra) and no immediate prospects of any. The few mines are small and maintained their previous wage scales and working conditions for years (post war scales). It appears that workers education should be the primary move.

Fraternally,

CHAS. W. GARDNER.

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### **THEATRE UNION FORMED**

The organization of the Theatre Union, which plans as its first production a Bonus Army play called "The Third Parade," has been announced by Charles Rumford Walker, who declared the group aims "to produce plays that dramatize honestly and artistically the significant currents and conflicts of contemporary American society."

Mr. Walker, author of "Steel" and other books, is chairman of the group, which has opened headquarters at 104 Fifth Avenue. Sponsors of the Theatre Union are Sherwood Anderson, Roger Baldwin, Stephen Vincent Benet, George S. Counts, Countee Cullen, Waldo Frank, Walter Hart, John Herrmann, Sidney Howard, John Howard Lawson, Lewis Mumford, John Dos Passos, Lynn Riggs, Mary Heaton Vorse and Edmund Wilson.

"The Broadway theatre excludes such plays as we plan to produce," Mr. Walker declared. "The commercial theatre is activated by the profit-motive, like any other business. It is afraid, therefore, of any radical departure from the stereotype play. Our plays will deal realistically with class conflicts, from a viewpoint which is definitely working class in sympathy. Our playwrights are concerned with such events of the contemporary American scene as hunger marches, breadlines, the struggles of workers, the radicalization of intellectuals, the bankruptcy of gigantic corporations and consequent millionaire suicides, and with important social problems that seldom find expression on the stage."

Paul Peters and Charles R. Walker, who co-authored the Bonus Army play, depict the siege of Washington by the veterans last Spring and their eviction by the army and police. Other plays available for subsequent production include a new play by Albert Maltz and George Sklar, co-authors of "Merry-Go-Round," and "Wharf Nigger" by Paul Peters. The Theatre Union invites playwrights to submit suitable plays.



# New Books . . .

## PROPAGANDA OR LIFE?

To Make My Bread. By Grace Lumpkin. Macaulay, New York, 1932. \$2.00.

THE recent textile strikes in the Southern Piedmont area have provided challenging material for writers interested in the transformation of hill people living in poverty on a few acres into mill workers living in poverty in a mill village and into fighters for the abolition of poverty and for the possession of the world.

Mary Heaton Vorse's novel "Strike," a romanticized, kaleidoscopic account of the Elizabethton, Marion, and Gastonia strikes, has for its hero the Northern labor leader who dies in the struggle, worshipped by the workers who have looked up to him as a Savior. Tom Tippet's "Mill Shadows," a drama of the Marion strike, has for its heroine an old mountain woman who after the tragic deaths instead of fleeing to the mountains as she wishes to do, stays to help the mill workers in their fight for a union. Fielding Burke's novel "Call Home the Heart" has for its heroine a woman who leaves her husband, "her heart" in the hills to go to the mill village with a man who has long wanted her. She becomes interested in the union, saves a Negro from being lynched, and then goes back to her husband in the hills. She looks with interest upon her young son as a potential fighter for the union's cause that she has abandoned.

Stronger and more realistic than these accounts centering about one dominant, romanticized figure is Grace Lumpkin's "To Make My Bread." The first part is laid in the hills. Vividly told is the dependence on nature, the pain of hunger in a cold winter, the poverty, misery, and loneliness of the hill dwellers. The characters stand out as living people: Emma, who after a realization that the hills offer no hope for her family, decides to go to the mill where she has been told by a company agent that she can earn enough to educate her children; Grandpap Kirkland who in order to provide food for the family is sent to jail for selling liquor, the only form in which corn is profitable; Kirk, generous, high spirited, killed by Sam McEachern when he tries to drive away Sam from Minnie whom he regards as his property; Basil, selfish, pious, who deserts the family in order to advance himself; John and Bonnie growing up; the McEacherns who exploit Grandpap, betray him; the Swains, the storekeeper and his wife,

who know how to prey upon the hill folk—the family, the kin, and the community in all of their activities are described in detail. Where so little happens, where people are so few, an event such as a baptizing is of great importance, and every individual has significance.

When Emma goes with her family (except Basil) and with Ora and her family to the mill town, she expects to see the land as she had been led to believe—"flowing with milk and honey, and gold growing on trees." Instead she feels the grinding of the teeth of the mill. "The mill crunched up and down. 'I'll grind your bones to make my bread.'" Bonnie and John do go to school, but they must work before and after school, and are after a time sucked into the mill.

Grandpap after being refused a job in the mill because of his age returns to the hills, but comes back to the family. From farmer he becomes a share cropper, and finally he too is absorbed by the mill. As night watchman he loses his independence and sings the praises of his boss. The oppression becomes stronger. Emma and Grandpap escape through death. John learns from another worker of a new world that offers hope to the workers, one they themselves must make:

"It is for us who know to make a world in which there will not be masters, and no slaves except the machines; but all will work together and all will enjoy the good things of life together."

Bonnie and John join the union formed with the aid of a Northern organizer. Bonnie, who is Ella May Wiggins, writes and sings her ballads, voicing what the other mill mothers feel. White and black organize together. "It's plain common sense we've got to work together," says Bonnie. When the workers are evicted from their homes, Dewey Fayon, the tool of the bosses, says, "I'm the Law." When the relief headquarters are destroyed, John hates the power behind the lawlessness, the Power that can break every law. When Bonnie tries to persuade the Negroes not to scab, Dewey Fayon calls out, "We'll get you for this." Bonnie, speaking at a meeting, is silenced by a shot. Her children are taken away to an orphanage by the Law. At the end John and John Stevens plan a secret meeting.

The style in this part is simple. Picket lines, beatings, arrests, deaths are narrated in a brief, matter-of-fact manner, episodes of a great struggle. "This is just the beginning."

Clear, poignant, real is this story of

men and women struggling to make a living from the hills, then from the mills, and at last uniting in an effort to make a world in which they can live. The fortunate ones under the capitalist system will undoubtedly call it propaganda; Southern textile workers will think it life.

MIRIAM BONNER.

## BUT, THIS IS CAPITALISM

Criminals and Politicians, by Denis Lynch. MacMillan Co. \$2.00.

CRIMINALS and Politicians' What space their activities have come to require in our dailies and weeklies! Here is a book which goes into some detail in describing the rackets' red rule, as its subtitle reads, for it is a bloody regime.

"A new aristocracy has arisen," so the book asserts in its first sentence and goes on to tell the history of some of the more outstanding figures of the underworld such as Owney Madden, "typical of the new rulers," Vincent Coll, Al Capone, etc.

Although the author readily enough links politicians with the underworld, he never pushes beyond the politicians. The gargantuan growth of racketeering is the "gift of prohibition," he states. He chiefly concerns himself with the most glaring and most obvious of the gunmen, the liquor racketeer, some business and labor racketeers, and the corrupt politicians who no doubt have become more numerous, more brazen and more powerful with the increased opportunities of prohibition.

Even as far back as Lincoln Steffens the searching of the muck rakers of the Tweed era led them to the field of business and finance. Mr. Lynch likens the utter helplessness of the government today to the futile efforts of government at that time, but seems to have no notion that the very meaning of the word racket—something for nothing, easy money—is pretty much the same as the final considerations of capitalist business, low cost and high profit, and does not see its roots in this prevailing psychology.

Among the "legitimate rackets," as Owney Madden puts it (I suppose he means those that are not frankly outlaw games) is the pier racket in New York. Leasing of piers, half of which are owned by the city, offers big revenue to those working into political influence.

The loaders' racket is closely related and keeps many of the powerful in lux-

urious idleness and makes the lives of the actual loaders most precarious.

One of the most vicious is the milk racket. When Dr. Louis L. Harris was Health Commissioner, he quite honestly and naively set out to fight the Czar of the Racket, Danziger, and public opinion was loud in his praise, yet what was the result? He committed the faux pas of trying to get at the root of the evil and when it led to the high-placed politicians, he was forced out of office. Even our reform President-elect, Franklin D. Roosevelt, pardoned Clougher, the inventor of the racket, on excellent recommendations.

The poultry trust involving the fight between the corrupted union of shochtim, and the Chicago Rabbinate; the Cleaners' and Dyers' Racket, and the story of Czar Farley, who objected to the "big employers" he worked for being called racketeers, and the unions he dealt with, "why they were both A. F. of L. Unions, so, of course, there wouldn't be any racketeering in them." are all dealt with in the book.

Mr. Lynch evidently thinks the main trouble is a lack of law enforcement and that political meddling in the police departments is responsible for the rise of our new aristocracy, who are supported in power by the untold billions in the

bootleg industry. He cites Jersey City as an example of the separation of politics and the police department and makes the amazing statement that though "changes of political corruption

have been leveled at Hague and his followers, no one could justly accuse them of being allied with the underworld, for organized crime is non-existent in their town!"

## The Fighting Unemployed of Smith Township, Ohio

Some eight months ago an organization now known as the Smith Township Unemployed League was formed for the purpose of securing relief for the unemployed workers of Smith Township, Mahoning County, Ohio.

Although bitterly opposed by the organized power of the politicians and industrialists of the county the League has been more or less successful in this purpose. The militant spirit of the membership has been instrumental in maintaining wage rates on work relief projects and maintaining relief standards higher than would have been possible without organized effort.

This league has set an example that many leagues in this locality are following, and has been instrumental in

the formation of many new leagues over the entire state. This movement has so disturbed certain elements that they have resorted to every known tactic to suppress it, such as sheriff's riot squads, when there was no indication of disorder, propaganda through political organizations, churches, etc., favoritism in distribution of work, coercion, and finally injunction.

Injunctions are not new in the industrial field but a court order restraining unemployed men from exercising their constitutional rights of petition, to secure food, clothing and shelter is certainly ridiculous, and is so regarded by all intelligent citizens of Smith township.

The events leading to the serving of the temporary restraining order were namely, that on the 22nd of November, the Smith township U. L. elected a committee of five to secure a truck to transport government flour for the unemployed, who otherwise were forced to carry it some five miles. Upon asking permission to get this flour, the relief agent, who by the way gained his experience in relief work at the Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company, absolutely refused to grant the request.

This refusal angered some of the committee who expressed their disapproval in no uncertain terms, whereupon the assistant relief agent assaulted one of the committee. He was promptly arrested and found not guilty by the court, although he testified he had actually assaulted the committeeman.

It is the use of tactics such as these that is showing the intelligent workers of Smith township just what is the true character of our public officials.

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## Philadelphia U. C. L. Carries On

(Continued from page 11)

stated "to membership with all the rights and privileges and any official position he may have held at the time he was suspended." In the meantime much indignation was felt by the rank and file in the League at the high-handed actions taken by the previous executive board and by their continued policy of ignoring the decisions of the general membership meetings, that is, refusing to carry out the wishes of the members as they expressed them at the open meetings of the League. Also much resentment was felt against Kelly and Steiner because they were alleged to be making undercover propaganda to the effect that if Weinberg were elected President they would see to it that the League was evicted from the Carpet Weavers' Hall. In addition we had information from reliable sources that Steiner and Kelly for some weeks prior to the election had been circulating a rumor that the CPLA members were only in the League to capture it.

### The Labor Record

Shortly after the League was organized the Philadelphia Union *Labor Record*, a weekly newspaper controlled by Socialist Party elements had secured the endorsement of the League and been accepted as its official organ. CPLA-ers approved of this step at first and worked wholeheartedly for the support of the paper, but gradually it became apparent to us that the *Labor Record* was only trying to build up its circulation at the expense of the League. In other words, exploiting the unemployed for its own financial purposes. The *Labor Record*, as the fight developed, soon became the "big gun" in the S. P. offenses.

About this time complaints began to pour in, particularly in reference to the relief and eviction committees. We, who were on the executive board, soon became aware that the machine, recognizing that they held a slight majority on the board, intended to make the fullest use of that majority by completely ignoring the general membership meetings and running the organization through a dictatorship of the executive board. For instance, although Weinberg had been reinstated to the executive board they refused to let him sit on it and also framed up charges against two of our supporters who were board members and attempted to railroad them out of the organ-

ization. They admitted quite openly that at least 80 per cent of the rank and file were with Weinberg and the CPLA element, but stated quite frankly that they believed the general membership was "too dumb to know what it was all about," and so they were going to run the organization for them.

### We Force An Election

Finally, after several hectic general membership meetings, we forced them to hold the election for Chairman. It was agreed that the election would be held on Wednesday evening, November 16, at the Carpet Weavers' Hall. In the meantime we had been having the greatest difficulty in getting them to agree to hold any general membership meetings at all, and even after it would be agreed that general membership meetings were to be held, they would make every effort to postpone them. For instance, on one occasion, although I was duly elected as Recording Secretary of the League, two men who have not yet been identified paid a visit to Police Headquarters and tried to get my application for a permit for a general membership meeting revoked on the ground that I was an imposter and did not represent the League at all.

On election night when the members went to the Carpet Weavers' Hall to vote they were notified by William F. Kelly that Joseph Steiner, who was in charge of the building, had left orders that no elections were to be held that night in the building. Resentment ran at fever height. The election committee in conjunction with the highest official of the League who was present removed the election to the home of Mr. John T. Dugan, one of the members, and proceeded with the balloting. The S. P. and U. T. W. elements refused to participate and so Weinberg was elected president of the League practically unanimously.

The next step on their part was to practically establish a strong arm dictatorship by seizing control of the headquarters with the assistance of Steiner and Kelly. They knew that, although they were only a score or so in number, through their control of the relief committee and of the building they might possibly force their rule upon the League by compelling the unemployed to come there for subsistence.

Much as we disliked to do so, because we realized that one of the chief

principles of the CPLA is to achieve unity in the labor movement, we felt that the time had now come when we could no longer tolerate the conduct of these individuals. They had broken every unwritten law of decency among workers by refusing to recognize the right of the majority and using underhanded tactics, and we now resolved to make a clean break. We, therefore, set up a new headquarters at the home of Brother John T. Dugan, 2112 E. Birch Street, and took action by expelling the group who had been sabotaging the work of the League. We have replaced this element on the executive board and are now carrying on as the original Unemployed Citizens' League of Philadelphia with approximately 80 to 90 per cent of the membership with us.

Meanwhile, the other group still maintain that they are the original Unemployed Citizens' League and, although they hold no general membership meetings or recognize the right of anyone to criticize their activities, they continue to use our name and solicit goods. They have even gone to the length of using gangster tactics against us. For instance, they attacked and seriously beat up Comrade Weinberg, and hardly a week passes but that some new incident of violence or attempted violence on their part against the League does not take place.

### Summary

In summing up what has happened in the light of after events I think we can say:

First, a mistake was made by us in the beginning in placing entirely too much confidence in non-CPLA elements in the League. For example, at first we worked wholeheartedly with the S. P. members and even appointed them to positions of responsibility and power, and when the test came the S. P.-ers played the role of leading the attack for such elements as Kelly and Steiner. Franz Daniels was the first man to open the attack by preferring charges against Weinberg. Is it any wonder then that Daniels is highly eulogized by Kelly, Steiner and Company, as being a model Organizer of the Socialist Party? Strange situations make strange bed-fellows, and here we had the situation of conservative Republicans combining with Socialist Party members to down the CPLA. In justice, however, to Daniels and certain other S. P. members I wish to state that my own personal opinion is, that they were simply made tools of by elements who were play-

ing a deeper game, and probably did not recognize it until too late.

Secondly, it would behoove any unemployed group in any section to question carefully the motives of those who join it. It became apparent soon after Kelly and Steiner became active in the League that they only wanted the League to function as a relief Organization and nothing else. There is a suspicion in the minds of many that these gentlemen had high hopes of securing an \$1800 a year appropriation from the Pennsylvania State Department of Welfare to the Carpet Weavers' Hall as an official relief station in the State of Pennsylvania. Kelly, in the presence of myself and several others said quite frankly on election night that "if he had his way the relief committee would simply run the organization and the rank and file could like it or lump it."

It is hoped that a recital of our experience in the Philadelphia situation will be of value to others who may be starting Unemployed Leagues, or who even now are active in them. We feel that despite the handicaps we are under at the present time that we will still be able to carry on. We feel that we fought a clean and honorable fight all the way through, and only broke with certain elements when to associate with them longer or to tolerate their actions by maintaining silence would brand us as lacking the courage to carry on in the way that militant and honest laborites must. Therefore, we still intend to carry on the Unemployed Citizens' League of Philadelphia, and we feel that having rid ourselves of this element that in the long run it will be a source of strength.

### **An A. F. of L. That Might Be**

(Continued from page 16)

with an intelligent study of the means which bring masses of people in motion, an assumption of responsibility by the leadership for what failure might cause the workers and hence the rise of greater confidence among the workers that they are fighting a winning cause, the recognition of the concern of every labor organization with all that relates to labor as a whole. All these are matters of leadership, and that raises the question: why a leadership that is "impotent and perverse," was not supplanted by a leadership that "wishes and can and has the will to do?"

**FIRST ISSUE  
OF**

# **Labor Action**

**Will be out January 14.**

**This will be a sample issue to show you what our weekly newspaper will be like. It will contain stories about unemployed organizations, the miners of Illinois and West Virginia, the fight against racketeering in labor unions, the struggles of southern textile workers to organize, the Holiday movement of the farmers of the middle west, etc. In addition it will carry feature stories about the labor movement in foreign countries, and editorials and signed articles by leading CPLA-ers.**

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# Workers, Refuse To Beg!

The immense wealth of this country belongs to you. By your toil you have created it. It is you who have built the factories, erected the sky-scrapers, dug the coal and iron from the earth, thrown bridges across the rivers—made this the richest country the world has ever known.

But today more than fifteen million of you are out of jobs, you and your children are hungry and starving. All the wealth you have created has been taken from you. You are not permitted to use the factories you have built, to make the clothing and other necessities you must have. The warehouses of the country are stuffed with the goods you have made, but you can not get them.

Those who have taken from you the wealth you have created are not called robbers. They are the respected members of the nation, the bankers, industrialists and the politicians. But they have robbed you just the same.

And now, after having taken everything from you, they ask you to starve peacefully and patiently. They want you to come to them with hat in hand, begging. They want to throw the responsibility for the depression upon

your shoulders, by accusing you of being lazy and shiftless. When you show any signs of resentment at such treatment they call out the police and the militia.

Workers, the responsibility for this depression rest with those who have robbed you. Don't let them scare you by calling you reds, accusing you of being lawless. Don't let them fool you into thinking that there is no money, that the government is broke. Don't be content with a crust of bread and a bowl of soup. The lawless ones are those who make you starve — the greedy bankers and millionaires who want to make slaves of you.

Join with your fellow workers and organize to demand bread and jobs. Don't beg. Don't accept charity. The wealth of the country belongs to you. Organize and you can take it!

To keep in touch with what the workers in other parts of the country are doing, you should read LABOR AGE. This is your magazine.

If you are unemployed and cannot subscribe, write to the editor. He will try to get someone to subscribe for you. But do not fail to read

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