

INTRODUCTION

THE CARTOON is an important political weapon. A few bold pencil strokes by an imaginative artist may convey a message more vividly than an editorial or an article. For this reason cartoons have sometimes been more feared than comment. They tell that Boss Tweed, smarting under the savage drawings of Thomas Nast, said: "Let's stop them damned pictures; I don't care so much what the papers write about me—my constituents can't read—but damn it, they can see the pictures."

Here at least is one form of art that cannot pretend to be "above the battle." The manufacturers' and bankers' press in the United States hires the best cartoonists to carry on political propaganda for manufacturers and bankers policies. These cartoonists are highly paid and their drawings are often syndicated and reproduced from coast to coast. Millions of people follow them from day to day and through the power of symbols are prejudiced in favor of policies which are inimical to the interests of the mass of Americans—the workers and farmers. Reactionary cartoons, spreading the gospel of capitalism, militarism, race prejudice and nationalist illusions, are illustrations to the text of the news and editorials in the capitalist press; they are one of the means by which the manufacturers and bankers mould "public opinion."

The workers have their own politics and their own press; they have cartoonists who use the symbols of their art to convey the aims and purposes of the working class. These cartoonists are not highly paid; often they are not paid at all; but their work stands up powerfully beside the best cartoons in this country as far as craftsmanship goes, and in content is much nearer to the essence of American political life.

There are in this collection 64 drawings, 54 of them by Fred Ellis and 10 by Jacob Burck. They are only a fraction of the drawings which appeared in the *Daily Worker* during the past year, but even this small number covers a wide range of topics. Turned out day by day in the heat of the class struggle, these cartoons indicate the recent course of events as seen by the revolutionary movement in the United States. Here will be found cartoons dealing with wage-cuts in the textile industry, the imprisonment of New Bedford strikers, the formation of new left wing unions in the needle trades and among the miners; the Hilquit scandal, and the role of the A. F. of L. as a red-baiting agency. A number of the cartoons, drawn during the presidential elections, satirize the Republicans, Democrats and Socialists alike as tools of capitalism; while others pillory the "new" Tammany and the new president. Some of the drawings are vivid reminders of the Chinese revolution, the Nicaraguan revolution, the brutal assassination of Julio Mella, the continued imprisonment of Mooney and Billings, despite the universal admission of their innocence. Here, too, are cartoons about the bloody Horthy regime in Hungary, the British empire, plots against the Soviet Union, the peace pact of Fascism and Vatican, the march of American imperialism in Latin America; the Kellogg Treaty (in one cartoon carried by armed American troops); war, looming behind pacifist smoke screens; the Vestris disaster, the oppression of the Negro masses and the role of the Soviet Union as leader of the world working class.

Though the cartoons in this volume are limited to the work of two artists, they touch on the major problems with which the American revolutionary workers have grappled in the past year. Of the two artists represented here, Fred Ellis, staff cartoonist of the *Daily Worker*, was a sign painter for twenty years and throughout that time a member in good standing of his union. His craftsmanship marks him as one of the best of contemporary political cartoonists, while the power with which he consistently presents the proletarian viewpoint makes him a valuable fighter in the ranks of the working class. Jacob Burck, the youngest of our proletarian artists, fully demonstrates in his cartoons that he has developed into a powerful cartoonist of the working class.

This is the fourth volume of "Red Cartoons." Previous volumes, issued in 1926, 1927 and 1928, have attracted attention not only here but abroad, where many of the cartoons were reproduced. This volume will be an important addition to the fighting equipment of every worker.

—JOSEPH FREEMAN.