
VII

A Message to Young America

TONIGHT I shall speak about the problems of young America and the nation. I shall pose no problem with which you yourself have not been confronted in your own painful experience.

What you seek is simple, and by right belongs to you. You seek education, you want jobs, you hope to live a happy and fruitful life. These are not unreasonable demands. Our country is the richest in the world. It has more than enough to allow every young man and woman a chance to work and study, to marry and raise a family, to make the best of his or her creative ability. We Communists merely propose that young people be given the full opportunity which the ample riches of our land make possible.

The question uppermost in your mind is: what is responsible for the wreckage of your hopes, for the denial of jobs, for the wastage of your years?

In response to my radio broadcasts I have received hundreds of letters from young people between the ages of 18 and 30. These letters come from all sorts of young people and all quarters of the nation, but they all come finally to the same question. Here is a letter from a young man in Missouri. He graduated from a technical high school, but has spent the past six years wandering over the country looking for a chance to work at anything. Here is a letter from a young woman, a school teacher, a college graduate in New York City, whose training is being wasted, who cannot find an opening for a job which would be useful to society and herself. Here is a young Negro worker employed in a sweatshop, working long hours, unable to study or better himself. All of them, in school and

out of school, employed or unemployed, ask the question: is there no hope, no future?

Your parents are also intimately concerned about these problems. They had hopes that you would have a rosy future in our great land. That is why they toiled so that you could be educated. That is why they made sacrifices so that your way in life should be easier than theirs. And now their hearts are heavy as they watch you pacing the floor, walking the streets, everlastingly in search of those elementary needs of life denied you by a decaying social order.

The present social order long ago lost its youth. It is now losing the faith of its young people. In terms of jobs, opportunity, happiness and culture, the present social order offers our young people nothing but the vague hope that if they live long enough they can take the jobs vacated by their elders as these die off in the natural course of events. This philosophy of resignation and despair is the best that can be offered the young people of America by Herbert Hoover, the real head of the Republican Party.

The Republican Party tries to win the votes of young people by expressing a hypocritical concern for the future well-being of the youth. It holds up the specter of future tax payments while, at the same time, it would deny, in the name of these future tax payments, the niggardly crumbs given the young people by the present administration.

What brazen hypocrisy this is! The Morgans, Rockefellers and du Ponts, all the princes of privilege, have suddenly become interested in lifting the burden of taxes from the shoulders of the youth! But these same people did not hesitate one moment before plunging America into a war whose bill will be footed not only by the present generation but by many future generations to come. These same people do not say one word about the present billion-dollar war budget for which the present young generation will have to pay taxes, as will their children, and their children's children after them.

The Communist Party, and the youth of America, agree with those who say that the youth should not pay the cost

of social legislation. We say to these people: You are right. The youth should not pay. But we propose that the Morgans and du Ponts shall pay! We propose to make the rich pay to balance the budget.

Just think, the Morgans, du Ponts, Rockefellers, Fords, who by their stranglehold monopolies have closed the door of opportunity for all but a chosen few—these grave-diggers of hope and aspiration have suddenly become the apostles of opportunity!

They oppose opportunity to security. But there is no contradiction between the two. We Communists insist on such a degree of social security for the young people of America as will make it possible for them to exercise their traditional right to seek for opportunity. Opportunity through security—that is what we want.

That is what our young people want. They cannot be and are not satisfied with mere waiting until their elders die. They do not think that the militarized C.C.C. establishments are the answer to their cry for vocational training and jobs. The meager benefits of an inadequate and undemocratic National Youth Administration are not enough for the youth of America. It is out of this dissatisfaction that mighty mass movements of the young people themselves, initiated by young people and led by young people, have been created.

These are progressive groups such as the Christian Youth Building a New World, the American Youth Congress, the American Student Union, organizations striving to win economic, educational and political rights for our young generation. We Communists are proud that our Party, and especially our Young Communist League, has good working relations with these organizations of young people. In practical work, done shoulder to shoulder with us, they have come to realize that we Communists have no interests apart from any of theirs, that our Party is truly a party dedicated to the welfare of our American young people.

These movements are guarantees that Gerald K. Smith and

his type of fascist demagogue will find it very difficult to enroll our young people as the storm troops of reaction.

I accuse Father Coughlin, the man behind Gerald Smith, of conspiring with William Randolph Hearst to prepare a fascist attack against American democracy. I hereby challenge Father Coughlin to come up to the platform of the Olympia Stadium in his own city of Detroit, when I speak there on October 27, and answer our charges.

Out of the progressive activities of our young people have grown two basic documents comparable to the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights. These are the now famous Declaration of Rights of the Young Generation, which was both a challenge and a rallying call to all youth, and the American Youth Act, which is the expression of the most vital needs of our young people for jobs and education.

The most splendid thing about the American Youth Act, introduced into Congress by Senator Benson and Congressman Amlie, is that it is the creation of the young people themselves. It is a beacon of hope, pointing a way out of the dark present to a future where our young people can raise families and make use of their creative abilities. Young America is on the march and their banner is the American Youth Act.

The Communist Party supports wholeheartedly the American Youth Act. We have as one of the main planks in our platform the demand, "Save the young generation." We have written its principles officially into our platform which declares:

Our country can and must provide opportunity, education and work for the youth of America. These demands of the young people as embodied in the American Youth Act—the Benson-Amlie Bill—must be enacted into law.

This bill provides for jobs, educational opportunities, and vocational training for all young people between the ages of 16 and 25.

The National Youth Administration budget must be maintained and enlarged.

Military training in the C.C.C. and schools must be abolished.

Free educational and financial assistance to the youth and the children must be guaranteed by both federal and state appropriations.

Child labor must once and for all be abolished and made unconstitutional.

We make this our program because our aim is to help the young people find the best road out of their difficulties, and because we champion the interests of all those downtrodden and oppressed by our present social order.

Of course, we believe the problems of our young people, like the problems of their elders, will be fully solved only by the abolition of the present order which is responsible for all their troubles, and by taking the socialist path which will open up the gates of progress to all humanity, and especially our young people. It is our firm belief that as our young people unite to win jobs and education, unite with their elders to defeat the cavalry of capitalism, hunger, fascism and war, they will come to understand the necessity of the socialist path.

President Roosevelt said that our young generation has a rendezvous with destiny. We say to our young people, "Do not make this a rendezvous with death." Do not allow the fascist-minded men of Wall Street to sacrifice you on the altar of greed and profits. The future of America is in your hands, my young friends. You can play your part in making our country great and progressive; or you can stand aside and permit unscrupulous demagogues to drag us to tyranny, war and fascist barbarism.

I am confident that the young generation, the flower of our people, in this grave crisis, when the balance hangs between democracy and fascism throughout the world, will put their young energies and their fresh minds to work on the side of progress. Young people of America, if you organize yourselves, if you join the trade unions, the farm organizations, if you build mighty organizations of youth, if together with the working class, the farmers, the middle-class people, you fight for democracy, then you can achieve those aims which are your hope and dream.

Young people, first voters, think hard about the problems of today. Reject the reactionary program of the Republicans

who would pit the young and old against each other. Do not be satisfied with the inadequate, half-hearted measures of the Roosevelt Administration. Vote Communist for the use of American riches to serve American life, for opportunity to work, for the chance to study, for the right to live a happy and normal life.

Broadcast over a coast-to-coast network of the National Broadcasting Company, October 9, 1936.