

# Stop, Look, Listen!

By WILLIAM Z. FOSTER

There is grave danger in the present railroad situation. The great financial corporations controlling the railroads of the United States are working like beavers to jam their program through Congress in the form of the Lea and Wheeler Bills (H. R. 4862 and S. 2009), and organized labor and others of the people's organizations are making but a feeble resistance. Indeed, the railroad union leaders with the exception of Whitney, head of the Trainmen, are actually helping the employers.

## MILLION LAID OFF

It is now an old story that the railroads are in a bad way. One-third of the total mileage is in bankruptcy, another third is on the brink of bankruptcy, and only 10 per cent can be called prosperous. As part of the general picture of railroad crisis, 1,000,000 railroad workers have been laid off in the past few years, and the whole railroad plant has been allowed to deteriorate badly. The main cause of the crisis is huge over-capitalization of the industry intensified by a falling off of traffic because of the depressed general industrial condition, and loss of railroad business to competing forms of transportation — buses, autos, trucks, steamships, pipelines, airplanes, etc.

## 200,000 JOBS ENDANGERED

To protect their financial interests the great Wall Street bankers who dominate this 26 billion dollars of railroad capital, most powerful of whom are Morgan and Kuhn-Loeb, have long since been working upon a program of their own. Chief among its planks are the following: (a) to slash the wages of the railroad workers, (b) to raise freight and passenger rates, (c) to lay off 200,000 more railroad workers through railroad consolidations, (d) to escape from regulation by the Interstate Commerce Commission, (e) to monopolize or strangle all forms of competing transportation, (f) to grab off Government subsidies with which to pay dividends and fixed charges on their overinflated capitalization.

A year or so ago the railroad put across one plank of their program by securing huge increases in freight and passenger rates, and throughout the depression they have been receiving RFC loans, which for the most part will turn out in the end to be Government subsidies. On two other planks of their platform of greed and exploitation, however, the railroad kings did not fare so well: these were consolidations and the 15 per cent general wage cut. Due to rank and file opposition they have not been able to go through with the consolidation they wish, (despite help from conservative railroad union leaders), and their attempted 15 per cent wage cut last year was defeated by the resistance of the workers and the Roosevelt Administration.

## CONSOLIDATIONS

Now, however, in the shape of the Lea and Wheeler Bills (H. R. 4862 and S. 2009) the great railroad corporations are making a fresh and still more determined drive to open up the way for the achievement of their whole reactionary program. Both of these bills, based upon the recommendation of the Committee of Six, comprising three railroad presidents and three railroad union leaders, would make it easy for the roads to carry through consolidation at the expense of the workers' jobs, and both bills would also assist the companies schemes of monopolization by helping the capitalists, under the glib disguise of securing a square deal for the railroads and equal treatment for all forms of transportation, to throw every type of interstate transportation under railroad banker domination. Both bills also give the railroads greater rate-making power, thereby raising



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the perspective of increased freight and passenger rates; and the Lea Bill especially, in response to the demand of big business generally for greater freedom from government regulations, tends to slack materially the control of the ICC over the railroads. The Lea Bill further provides for huge, easy term government loans to the railroads which would be virtually subsidies to the coupon clippers. The bills contain no protection whatever for the railroad workers interests.

## BANKERS' PROGRAM

Thus these two bills embody in substance the whole program of the railroads, not excluding, eventually, a wage cut. The workers have much to lose in jobs and working conditions and in the weakening of their unions should the Lea and Wheeler Bills be enacted into law. The farmers and the general public also stand to lose by higher railroad rates and the strengthening of the railroad monopolists. While all workers favor the idea that every form of transportation be equally regulated under one Federal head, this will not lead them into accepting the company's false arguments to the effect that the prosperity of the railroads and their workers depends upon driving all other forms of transportation out of business or under railroad banker domination.

The worst of the situation is that the railroad union leadership have been taken into camp by the railroad owners. All of them, except President Whitney of the B. of R. T., are strongly supporting the Lea and Wheeler Bills. These leaders have completely shelved all of the railroad workers economic and political demands—for train limit and full crew laws, for the six-hour day, for

better pensions and unemployment insurance, for government ownership of the railroads, etc.—and are utilizing the prestige and resources of the unions to intensify the employers' huge ballyhoo for these bills. By contrast to this harmful policy of the Railway Labor Executives' Assn., the courageous opposition of President Whitney of the B. of R. T., to the nefarious Lea and Wheeler Bills stands out as an intelligent defense of the interests not only of the workers but also of the great mass of the American people.

## ANTI-NEW DEAL DRIVE

The powerful capitalist combinations of this country are developing a great offensive against the Roosevelt Administration, the New Deal and all the achievements won by the masses during the past several years. The drive of the railroad companies to accomplish their profit-grabbing schemes through the Lea and Wheeler Bills is part of this reactionary offensive. And it is especially dangerous when union leaders are enlisted in such a destructive enterprise.

## REAL REMEDY

The Lea and Wheeler Bills should be defeated. This is vitally necessary, but it is not enough. There must also be a positive railroad program put forward. It is very necessary that a plan of railroad rehabilitation be formulated which will really benefit the railroad workers and the public, by putting more men to work, by increasing the purchasing power of the workers generally and by providing better and cheaper transportation—a plan which will not be (as are the Lea and Wheeler Bills) a means for fattening the purses of parasitic railroad stockholders. The Roosevelt Administration, which is not supporting the Lea and Wheeler Bills, may have some such project in mind, corresponding to its general policies of industrial recovery, although the Government has not yet publicly stated its railroad program.

It is high time, also, that the railroad workers and their unions speak out again, as they did in the days of the Plumb Plan, in support of government ownership of the railroads. At most, rehabilitation programs, even the best, are only stop-gap propositions. The real remedy is for the Government to take over the roads, setting up a democratic management and squeezing out 10 to 15 billion dollars of "water" from the railroad securities. This is the only way that the jobs of the railroad workers can be protected, efficient railroad service guaranteed, and the destructive railroad crisis solved.

## Report Friday On Bills to Curb Discrimination

### Albany Delegation to Tell of Talks with Legislators

An official report will be made Friday night at the St. Phillips Church, 215 W. 133rd St., by the delegation which recently interviewed legislative leaders in Albany regarding their support of the 11 progressive bills sponsored by the temporary Commission on the Condition of the Urban Colored Population of the Manhattan Citizens Committee.

The delegation was formed by 11 to support 11 of 14 bills introduced by State Senator Jacob

Schwartzwald and Assemblyman William T. Andrews, chairman and vice-chairman, respectively, of the Temporary Commission.

These progressive measures would amend the civil service law in relation to discrimination in public employment, amend the state housing law with relation to discrimination against tenants and amend the education law in relation to appointments. Other bills among the 11 aimed at other discriminatory practices.

The three bills which the delegation did not support but proposed as being not to the best interests of labor were outlined to Governor Lehman by spokesmen for labor unions at a conference which members of the delegation had with the chief executive while they were in Albany.

A mass Daily and Sunday Worker circulation—a mass Communist Party — Communist candidates in the City Council—a great progressive victory in 1940!