

LABOR ACTION

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FIVE CENTS

SOCIALISM AND THE WORKING CLASS

6th ANNUAL PAMPHLET ISSUE

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LABOR: KEY TO A BETTER WORLD

Why Socialists Look to the Working Class as the Force for Social Progress

By HAL DRAPER

For social change toward a better world, socialists believe the most important and indeed decisive social force is the struggle of the working class. Why the working class?

Why do socialists believe there is a special connection between their own great goal of a new society and the interests of labor, this one segment of society? Is it because we "idealize" workers as being better, or more clever, or more honest, or more courageous, or more humanitarian, than non-workers?

—Isn't it rather true that the workers have time and again followed reactionary courses and leaders and have by no means showed any invariable affinity for progressive causes? Don't they follow the Stalinist totalitarianism in countries like France and Italy; and where they do not, are their own trade-union bureaucrats (like the British) much of an asset to genuine socialism? Haven't they been misled and deceived like any other section of society? Aren't they filled with race prejudice in the U. S., sometimes even more so than the upper classes? If it is true that workers are "naturally" pro-socialist, why is it they have made such a mess of things, voting for reactionaries and fakers and supporting the status quo? . . . And so on along the same lines.

Most of this type of questioning is based on pure and simple misunderstanding of the socialist viewpoint about the working class. Especially in this country, where the socialist movement has always been relatively weak, the most popular anti-socialist notions are most often founded on simple misinformation about what socialists believe, because their voices have not been loudly heard.

Socialists do not "idealize" workers in any sense whatever.

Taking them man for man, as individuals, there is no reason to argue whether workers are "better" human beings than others because they are workers. This whole approach, whether pro or con, has nothing to do with the socialist conception.

Good or Bad People?

Let's underline this in a different way. If we try to view social issues as merely conflicts between Good People and Bad People, then surely we must say that men who insist on starving others are Bad. The 75-cent-an-hour wage minimum is surely a pittance. Yet opposition even to this pittance would be strong among employers, especially small-industry employers, while it is virtually absent among workers. Is this the trend among such employers because they are Bad Men? We would find, rather, that these employers are just as likely to be kind fathers, generous friends, charity-givers, indulgent husbands, and not the type to deliberately run over children in the street. They act one way as individual atoms in the social fabric; they act another way as part of their class collectivity.

They explain this, when they do, by saying "Business is business." This is their way of distinguishing their individual and human thoughts and role from their role as a member of the business community—that is, of their class. In the latter case, the conditions of existence and interests of "business" make out of them a social force that has little resemblance to their individual psychologies.

Like every other class or group, the working class is more than the sum of its individual atoms.

Man for man, workers are not "naturally" more pro-socialist than anyone else. It is a question of what direction they are pushed in by the conditions of their existence as a class and by their interests as workers, just as this is the question with every group.

This indeed is one reason why so often socialist ideas tend to be initiated in a systematic way not by ideologists from the working class but by men from the "educated classes," the bourgeoisie and intellectuals, men like Marx or Engels, for example, who were not proletarians themselves—although it should be noted that the impulses to the systematization of such ideas were coming from the working masses' struggles and conditions, not from other sections of society. Indi-

vidual ideologists were led to align themselves with the working class.

If they were drawn in this direction, it was because here was the dynamic social force which they recognized as the decisive one for putting flesh and blood on ideas.

When a working class is politically and socially undeveloped, it is well-nigh inevitable that its members will be filled with all sorts of backward and even reactionary notions. For example, it has often been found in the U. S. that racial intolerance decreases with amount of education; college graduates are less prejudiced, etc. Now, in general, the children of the working classes get less schooling than the offspring of the middle classes and bourgeoisie. So, according to this pattern, workers should be far more filled with racism than the rest of the population. But what is instructive is to see where this neat pattern does not hold.

Class Education

It holds best, where labor is most poorly organized as a class, and where it is organized in the least class-conscious fashion. The South is not only a cauldron of racism but also a sinkhole of union-busting and open-shopism. Toward the other end of the scale, racism is nowhere so assiduously combated as in the more militant mass-production unions that sprang from the CIO upheaval, like the United Auto Workers, not to speak of the socialist movement which takes a vanguard role against racism.

Here anti-racism is not a function of school education; it is a function of class education.

More than that, in a union like the UAW or the CIO as a whole, the organization is often more anti-Jim-Crow than the sum of its members. That is, the dynamics of the class push it as a whole more strongly against racism, which is divisive of the class, than do the individual opinions of its members.

What we have been emphasizing, then, is that the socialist sees no special magic in the "worker" as an atomized individual. The special "advantage" of the working class (if we may call it that) springs from certain inherent drives of its class position in society, its ineradicable interests as a group, its conditions of life; and this "advantage" comes into play insofar as this class organizes itself, as it is inevitably driven to do, and transforms the thinking and ideas of its individual components in the course of its class experiences. We will see what this "advantage" is.

Now it is this sort of thing that the socialist calls the development of class-consciousness. As other articles in this issue explain in sufficient detail, this country is the

one modern country in the world where the working class is still at a rather elementary stage of class-consciousness. Therefore it is particularly in this country, and most particularly among academicians who have no roots in the real social struggle of our times, that the special role of the working class is most persistently questioned.

It would be much harder to do so in Great Britain, for example, where this "special role of the working class" is the daily headache of the Tories, who face as opposition a party which proclaims itself as a class party in its name.

Or in France and Italy, where (as we shall see) the special danger of Stalinism is closely connected with the Stalinists' ability to use and abuse the "special role of the working class."

Or in almost any other European country, where the working class is strongly organized as a class. Or even in leading countries of "backward" Asia, where prominent roles are played by socialist parties in the domestic struggle for power.

U. S. Out of Step

In this respect, it is the United States which is "out of step," which is the exception to the rule (as we discuss on page 2), and while American bourgeois thinkers may be grateful for their exceptional position, they have no license to deny the rule.

The "rule" is that all over the world organized working-class struggle is inextricably bound up with every effort toward freedom and human emancipation. Where the working class has been defeated, democracy and progress and humanity has been defeated too. Where the forces of freedom have fought, it is the working-class forces that have been in the van.

There is no other sector of society of which this or anything like it can be said—not the middle class, not the "intelligentsia," not the "educated classes," not the students, not the "managers," not anyone else except the organized proletariat, for good or ill.

What is this "advantage" which the working class possesses willy-nilly, by virtue of the terms of its own existence under capitalism? Here are in outline form the special characteristics inherent in a social class whose individual human components (remember) are no better or worse than you or I or any other Tom, Dick and Harry.

(1) The conditions of life of the working class lead it to organize in the first place—and most solidly as a homogeneous movement.

There is, of course, one other class which rivals the working class in this respect: the capitalists themselves, whose class-consciousness and sense of class solidarity are ever-present models for the workers themselves. But we are speaking of forces for freedom.

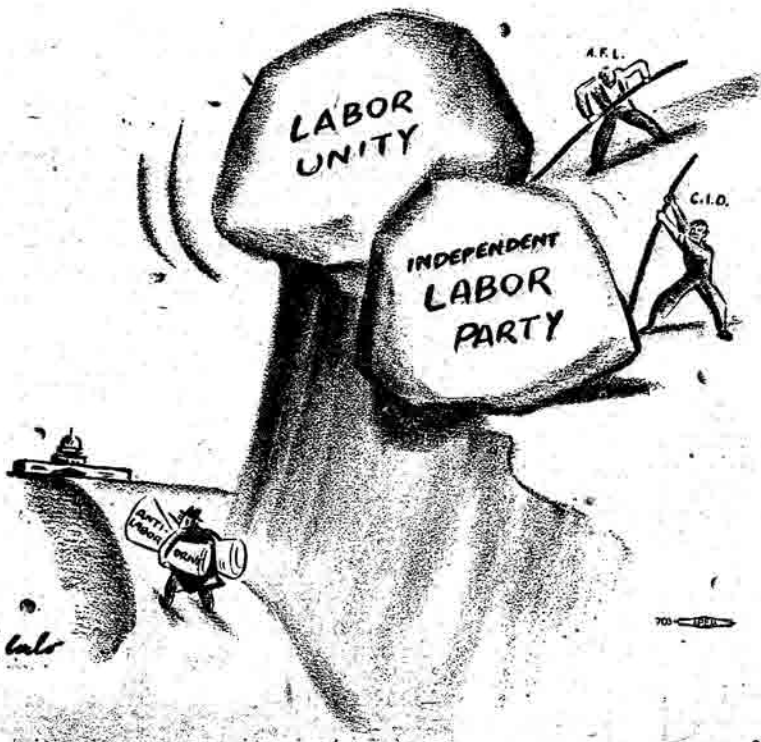
Nowhere and at no time has a predominantly agrarian population (farmers or peasants) been able to duplicate the organizational achievements of the working class.

The difference is no reflection on the individual farmer. By terms of their life, they live in atomized groups which stress self-sufficiency, separateness, reliance in individual effort; they are not thrown together in crowds and subjected to simultaneous stresses in the heat of social struggles as are workers.

Workers are taught organization not by their superior intelligence or by outside agitators, but by the capitalists themselves. They are organized on the assembly lines, in the factory gangs, in shifts, in work teams, in the division of labor of capitalism itself. Capitalism cannot live and cannot grow without "organizing" its workers and teaching them the virtues of a form of "solidarity," of working together.

It teaches discipline. It enforces centralization of effort. It hammers home

(Turn to last page)



CHAPTER 2

The Special U.S. Background

Why American Labor Is 'Different'

By GORDON HASKELL

The American labor movement is different from the labor movement in any other country. One of the ways in which it differs most strikingly from most other national labor movements in the capitalist portion of the world is that it is non-socialist and even anti-socialist.

How do American socialists account for this fact? Most important of all, doesn't this non-socialist character of the American working class contradict the socialist analysis of capitalist society and prove that, in America at least, socialism is a utopian ideal with no real political future?

The enemies and critics of socialism have for a long time claimed that the peculiar history of this country renders it immune to serious socialist "infection." In fact, when one surveys the formidable stream of anti-socialist literature devoted to proving that socialism does not and cannot have any real mass appeal to the American working class, one wonders why so much money and energy should be poured out to convince people that they are immune to socialist conviction.

America, like every other country in the world, has a unique history, and the modern American labor movement, like all other sections of our society, is a product of it. Socialists for the past century, including Karl Marx, have discussed and analyzed at length those features of American history which have made the American working class and its labor movement different from those of other lands. In this article, we will try to summarize briefly the highlights of this analysis, and to see what implications it has for the socialist approach and movement in America today.

Socialists and their opponents agree that the chief reason a mass socialist movement has failed to develop in this country lies in the relative fluidity of American society throughout its history.

In much of Europe, the present ruling capitalist class was able to come to power only after a bitter struggle against the feudal ruling class which preceded it. The economic development which made this struggle possible, and its outcome inevitable, also created a modern working class. From the time this class became strong enough to put forward its own claims to social and political recognition and power, it was opposed by a ruling class which knew from experience that revolutionary change is possible, and sought to use every means at its disposal to make sure that the bourgeois revolution remained the last one.

No Individual Escape

The modern European working class grew up in an historically old continent with firmly established social and economic patterns. Father and son followed grandfather in the same occupation, or at least in the same class. The history of Europe as well as the concrete circumstances of life taught them that social, economic and political oppression could only be fought by mass movements. The possibility of individual escape from their circumstances was restricted pretty much to immigration abroad, not to a rise out of their class in their own country.

In the new continent of America the situation was far different.

Up to the close of the last century the great, open frontier beckoned anyone who found life too difficult at home. The vast wealth of the country made much room

further up on the economic ladder, because the ladder itself was growing by leaps and bounds. The succeeding waves of immigration produced an American working class stratified in skill and status and broken up along national lines. All of this worked against the development of the kind of social and political self-consciousness which makes the working classes of Europe an independent political as well as economic sector of society.

This does not at all mean that the American workers played no distinguishable role in American politics. The fact that men could escape to the rigors and opportunities of the frontier did not mean that they were immune from grinding exploitation and poverty in all parts of the country. From the end of the Civil War there were repeated efforts to form workingmen's parties and trade-union organizations.

From that day to this, the workers' movements have been in the forefront of every social and political struggle for democracy and social reform. The pioneers of every movement—whether to broaden the franchise, establish public education, create a system of social and old-age insurance, or abolish racial discrimination—have found that their strongest support came from the workers and their movements.

These have been movements of reform within the capitalist system. Generally speaking, the workers have formed the shock-troops of political movements led and controlled by middle-class and capitalist groupings. The workingmen's parties which were formed at various times failed to survive the demand for immediate, concrete results in a society whose apparently limitless capacity to expand opened the prospects for such results to any massively organized pressure group.

Movements of Reform

The American trade-union movement's history has run parallel to the political history of the working class. Although many of the unions here were originally organized by socialists, and an early American Federation of Labor convention adopted a statement which looked to the socialist reconstruction of society as the ultimate goal of the labor movement, the dominant tendency of the American labor movement has been merely to win better wages and working conditions for its members rather than to seek to change the economic system.

The American workers have made enormous gains through their trade-union movement. But these gains have been stubbornly contested at every step by the employers, and the resultant clash has often led to bitter and even bloody struggles. In these battles the employers have traditionally been able to count on the police and even the armed forces to assist them in crushing the resistance of the workers. Yet time and again the American working class has shown a solidarity, organizational imagination and capacity to sacrifice and struggle which is unsurpassed by the workers of any other country.

The American labor movement grew up as a movement of the skilled workers. For many decades attempts to organize the semi-skilled and unskilled workers of the new mass-production industries were thwarted by the employers on the one hand, and ignored or even opposed by the old leadership of the AFL craft unions on the other. But during the '30s the workers flocked into the CIO unions and finally succeeded in establishing powerful and stable unions in the strongholds of the giant monopoly industries which had resisted organization up till that time.

The rise of the CIO marked a sharp turn for the American labor movement. The industrial unions were formed in dramatic struggles involving sit-down strikes, pitched battles with city and company police, general strikes which bordered on local insurrections (Minneapolis, Toledo), all of this marked by a high degree of "disrespect for authority" and "direct action."

The remarkable and apparently sudden change from a very backward and collaborationist working class to quite violent and militant struggles was characteristic of a tendency in American life toward sharp transformations and toward the easy use of violent methods by all classes, particularly by the bourgeoisie. Here we see another aspect of the frontier tradition, not that aspect which safety-valved the class struggle but that aspect which sharpened methods when it broke out.

This development tended to create unions with a lively rank-and-file democracy and mass-membership participation. From a narrow instrument for the protection and advancement of the interests of the skilled workers, the organization of the mass-production industries transformed the American labor movement into a social organization which seeks to represent the interests of the working class as a whole.

"Organize the Unorganized"

For the old craft unions, "organize the unorganized" was a relatively empty slogan. For the mass industrial unions it is a pressing necessity. Large sectors of unorganized industry are a constant threat to the existing unions. This accounts for the strenuous efforts to extend union organization to the South, where the workers confront the employers once again in the brutal, gloves-off and no-holds barred kind of struggles which used to be characteristic of union battles throughout the country.

The same is true of the trade-union movement's atti-

tude toward equal rights for Negroes and other minorities. The old AFL unions had (and many still have) a shameful record of discrimination against minorities. This was part and parcel of the skilled-worker, craft-union, "aristocracy of labor" philosophy of these unions.

In the mass-production industries, however, it was soon found that discrimination was an immediate, direct threat to union solidarity and survival. The employers made it a practice to bring Negroes in to scab against striking workers. Many Negro workers, having suffered discrimination at the hands of the unions, saw nothing wrong in getting jobs at the expense of the organized workers. Quite aside from idealistic social considerations (which also were present), the CIO unions took the lead in fighting discrimination both inside the labor movement and as practised by employers, and many AFL unions were impelled to follow their example.

The old divisions in the American working class which hindered its organization and delayed the development of its self-consciousness have been tending to disappear. Divisions along lines of national origin have been reduced in importance as the mass of the workers are now native-born. Even prejudice and discrimination against Negroes, that deep disease of American society, no longer plays the same kind of vitiating and divisive role. Regional differences and craft differences have tended to be reduced in importance by the urbanization and geographic unification of the country, and by the reduction of the skilled trades to small islands in a vast sea of semi-skilled and unskilled production workers.

All this has tended to reduce the special characteristics of the American working class as compared to the working classes of Europe. Nevertheless, the American workers remain politically backward as compared to their brothers in Europe, as we pointed out at the beginning of this article.

This relative political un-self-consciousness of the American workers and their labor movement is due today primarily and above all to the aristocratic economic position which this class enjoys as compared to the working class of any other country.

World Labor Aristocracy

The United States bestrides the capitalist half of the world like a colossus. It out-produces, out-sells, out-consumes every other country in the world, and most of them combined. It has reached this pre-eminent position as a result of the general tendency of European capitalism to decline and decay hastened along by two world wars which devastated Europe while leaving the United States intact.

The American workers share in this prosperity. Just as American capitalism is just about the only "going concern" in a world where the earlier-born capitalist systems are gasping for life, so the American working class is the "labor aristocracy" of the world.

Their position today is roughly analogous to the position of the British working class at the high point of British imperialist development, when they shared (however meagerly) in the exploitation of millions of colonial slaves. That situation then produced a British working class which lagged far behind its brothers in many countries of the Continent in political activity and consciousness, and the present situation has the same effect on the American working class.

But there are many disturbing elements in the present prosperity of this country.

For one thing, it depends for its continuation on a vast expenditure for armaments, and hence on the world tensions which make this level of armaments politically and socially acceptable to the American people. A prosperity based on such a foundation is the least likely to endure. It is threatened internally by the necessity to continually expand the armament sector in order to keep the rest of the economy on an even keel.

And it is threatened even more ominously by the logical issue of an armament race: world atomic war.

Such are the problems which face the modern American working class and its labor movement. The historic development which has thwarted the rise of independent, socialist class-consciousness in this country has nevertheless produced a class which is more homogeneous and better organized than ever before in its history.

Whether or not it will rise to face and solve the new problems which confront it depends not only on its history, but on the conscious activity of all who see the problems and are determined to struggle for their solution on a progressive basis.

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OUR PAMPHLET-ISSUES

This is the 6th in LABOR ACTION's series of annual pamphlet-issues devoted to explaining the Independent Socialist view on basic questions of the day. Our regular features and articles on current politics will be back next week as usual.

Because of the special nature of this issue, the Young Socialist Challenge (edited and published by the Young Socialist League), which appears every week as a page-section of LABOR ACTION, is likewise omitted. Our thanks to its editors for their cooperation.

CHAPTER 3 **The Irrepressible Conflict**
The Class Struggle —
And the Trade Unions

By **BEN HALL**

"There is no class struggle in America": This precept now belongs in the American catechism along with the little boy who chopped down the cherry tree but wouldn't lie. And, as prescribed by the official Way of Life, unions obstinately refuse to "recognize" the class struggle and boast proudly that they remain aloof from it.

But it "recognizes" the unions; in fact, it creates them. Despite the most sincere protestations of labor officials, unions practice the class struggle and a hundred times a day demonstrate its persistence.

In his recent quest for a smattering of respectability, Walter Reuther has lately cautioned against class strife, and the formation of a Labor Party. But he is a living refutation of himself:

• He appeals to workers to form, join, build, and be loyal to their own class organizations—unions. He insists that they conduct their affairs without outside interference and excludes not only the Communist Party but lawyers, bankers, storekeepers, and employers. Unless he were a worker under the jurisdiction of a labor union, even J. Edgar Hoover would be barred from membership. **The union is a class institution.**

• He insists that unions concentrate on raising the living standards and rights of their membership, that they demand and fight for higher pay, shorter hours, better working conditions, security—even if this means cutting into employers' profits. These are class aims.

• He crusades for pensions for wage-workers. After reaching the age of 60-65 ("too old to work but too young to die") and after putting in 20-25 years of service and sweat on the job, workers must retire in dignity and security. What is this demand but a dramatic confession that tens of millions of men and women are fated to live out their whole lives as hired wage hands—in America?

• And through unions, workers fight for maternity benefits, hospitalization, life insurance and death benefits. From the hour of birth, through the long years of work, to pensions, to death—all under the surveillance of unionism. These demands and the unremitting struggle to achieve them are the unconscious recognition of the workers as a class, fixed within modern capitalist society.

Challenge Employer "Rights"

• And far more through the unions: Reuther, and other labor leaders who publicly spurn the class struggle, challenge virtually every right of the employers: their right to hire and fire, to fix wages and hours, to regulate the speed of production and the intensity of labor, to discriminate, to promote, to transfer workers. The only right which they concede in theory is the general "right to own and manage" but they resist every effort to define this right concretely as a limitation on the range of unionism and the scope of its demands. It was such a refusal by the labor leadership that helped to explode Truman's Labor-Management Conference in 1945.

• And they, the labor officials, call upon workers to rally to their own class political organizations—not a labor party it is true, but to a labor Political Action Committee, or a Labor's League for Political Education. And through this class-dominated political institution, candidates for public office are judged, tested, rejected, or endorsed on the basis of union criteria: Will their candidacy advance or retard the cause of labor? The conclusions they reach are usually wrong, for they persist in supporting Democrats and Republicans, but the question they ask is correct: Will their candidacy advance or retard the cause of labor?

• And their political organization is not satisfied with vote-catching and ward-healing. It tries to elaborate a program and a philosophy, concerning itself not only with wages and hours but with all the problems faced by the nation: war and peace, foreign policy, democracy, race relations, industry, education, health, government.

It does not—not yet—propose that the power of government be placed in the hands of elected representatives of a labor party, but it does insist that all politics be guided by labor's outlook. And it appeals for support not only from union workingmen but from all the poorer, ordinary people.

When he stepped into the UAW president's chair, Reuther summarized his aim in a slogan: "Make the UAW the vanguard in America and the architect of the future." Such is indeed the role of the working class, vaguely and formlessly hinted at in the words and actions of union leaders, foreshadowing its clear and conscious role tomorrow.

On the big questions before the country, the majority of the working class tends toward a common point of view. And that class against whom it struggles, the capitalist class, which owns the machinery of production and which therefore is able to live off the labor of others, also tends toward a common point of view. In industry, in politics, in society the organized workers are pitted against the organized employers: there is your class struggle.

"First organize them, then unionize them." That is the slogan of the United Auto Workers. It is a succinct statement of the task of unions, not only to enroll workers as union members but to change their whole outlook, to make them think as union men. No class struggle, no class-consciousness in America? But a

loyal, enduring union-consciousness is deeply rooted in the organized working class. And this union-consciousness is class-consciousness at a lower level.

Nothing seemed more pitiful than the union movement in the late 1920s. It had been decimated by an open-shop drive after the First World War. In the United Mine Workers, John L. Lewis had crushed union democracy, expelled progressives who wanted to fight for industrial unionism everywhere, and carried the union into decline. The craft unions which dominated the AFL were hostile or indifferent to the organization of the unorganized mass-production industries. Racketeering flourished. The AFL remained aloof from politics, and when the depression hit, fought every demand for government aid to the unemployed.

In the crisis of 1929, industrial unions were almost obliterated. The Miners Union and the needle-trades unions were reduced to a small fragment of a still-organized minority holding on with desperation. Unions a result of the class struggle? It seemed ludicrous.

CIO—The Great Revival

Yet, it was out of this union movement that the great revival emerged. John L. Lewis for the United Miners, David Dubinsky for the Ladies Garment Workers, and Sidney Hillman of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union formed the CIO and opened the great strike struggles that broke open-shopism in the mass-production industries.

It was class struggle on a giant scale as auto workers and rubber workers seized the factories in mass sit-in strikes and defied all the threats of courts, police, militia, and vigilantes.

In February 1937, 2000 sit-in strikers in GM plants in Flint, Michigan, were directed by court order to quit the plants. Governor Murphy was toying with the idea of ousting them with militia. They sent him a letter:

"We, the workers in the plant are completely unarmed, and to send in the military, armed thugs, and armed deputies will mean a bloody massacre. . . . We have carried on a stay-in strike over a month in order to make General Motors Corporation obey the law and engage in collective bargaining. We have decided to stay in the plant. We have no illusions about the sacrifices this decision will entail. We fully expect that if a violent effort is made to oust us many of us will be killed, and we take this means to make it known that if this result follows from the attempt to eject us, you are the one who must be held responsible for our deaths."

Their courage won. It was such a spirit that brought unionism to mass-production industry. The CIO was born in a wave of intense class struggle.

• It brought a measure of democracy into industry. For the first time, the giant monopolies were forced to recognize the class organizations of their workers in auto, steel, rubber, oil. Industrial unionism was founded.

• It struck a blow against racial discrimination in industry. Negroes poured into the new unions with equal rights and they won security on the job, the right to promotions, to seniority. Thousands of Negroes became trained workers' leaders in the course of strike struggles and union-building.

• It revived political democracy. It enrolled millions into industrial unions and quickly brought them into politics. It entered into election campaigns which became the forum for airing opposing social programs and demands and not simply a contest between Tweedledee and Tweedledum.

The No-Strike Pledge

During the Second World War, union officials made an all-out effort at class peace. Virtually every important union with the exception of the United Mine Workers gave a "no-strike pledge," promising under no conditions to strike for the duration of the war. They were ready to surrender their weapons in the interests of uninterrupted production of munitions to defeat Japan and Hitler Germany.

But although they were ready to give up the class struggle and freeze the unions in a state of suspended animation, they were not ready to give up the unions, or let them be destroyed. The no-strike pledge, which was presumably an "unconditional" pledge, was actually founded on an unstated but decisive condition: democracy must remain and unions must be protected. Only the Stalinists, for their own pro-Russian anti-labor motives, were ready to enforce the pledge to the point of destroying unions.

The no-strike pledge proved impossible to enforce because the class struggle is impossible to eradicate in capitalist society. Wherever a free labor movement exists, the class struggle tends to spring to life within it. Even the most conservative unions (yes, even gangster and racket-ridden unions) contain the potential for regeneration as fighting institutions of the working class. Those who would wipe out the class struggle, or at least the possibility for an organized working-class struggle, would have to destroy root and branch every vestige of unionism.

The class struggle is not created by the quirk of individuals nor can it be set aside at their whim. It is "provoked" by the very nature of capitalist society and cannot be shrugged off as inconvenient even during wartime. If the labor leaders were quite eager to live in peace and harmony, the employers and their political representatives were not. In fact, the more the unions stressed their peaceful intentions, the more provocative became the employers. Once the unions announced that

they would not tolerate strikes, the bosses had a free hand to fire union activists, to chisel on wages and piecework, to speed up production by squeezing workers, to violate contracts in a thousand small ways, while controls made real wages drop behind prices.

The class struggle erupted, unofficial but real. Despite government pressure, harangues from the capitalist-owned press, and appeals from labor officials, strikes began—so-called "wild cats," unauthorized and spontaneous. Only in the United Mine Workers Union were the top officials courageous enough to organize and lead strikes to defend working standards.

But in other unions the strike movement went on as "wild-cat" stoppages opposed from above but led by rank-and-file union militants from below, in defiance of official policy. Literally hundreds, if not thousands, of unauthorized strikes sprinkled the country during the war, reaching every industrial city and every industry. The rubber industry was shut down by a general strike in the Akron rubber plants, unauthorized but solid. In Detroit, two or three new walkouts began every day. The movement began as a series of semi-spontaneous, isolated, disconnected incidents but grew in scope.

The no-strike pledge and resistance to it invaded the internal life of the unions as movements to rescind the pledge mounted. In the Rubber Workers Union, in the shipbuilding unions, and even in the solidly Stalinist-controlled United Electrical Workers, caucuses were founded to fight to rescind the pledge. But it was in the United Auto Workers that the movement reached its height. In local unions, the pledge became an election issue and by 1944 a nation-wide rank-and-file caucus was formed in advance of the union's convention, and gained one-third of the votes for rescinding.

Union officials who resisted the movement against the pledge too firmly or who sought to crush and expel unauthorized strike leaders found themselves in trouble. (The downfall of the Communist Party in the labor movement, the most vicious and unrelenting enemy of striking militants, dates from this period. It was in the struggle against the no-strike pledge that progressive unionists began to learn that Stalinism is a reactionary anti-working-class force.)

Stalinist Role Exposed

President Dalrymple of the United Rubber Workers Union dreamed of emerging as the strong man who would at last make the no-strike pledge stick; he suspended locals; he fined strikers; he expelled union members. But when the dust settled, he found it wise to retire without running for re-election. In the United Auto Workers President R. J. Thomas, Secretary-Treasurer George Addes and the Stalinists, who formed one united bloc, were stern advocates of the no-strike pledge and sought to restore piecework to the auto industry where unionists had struggled for years for its removal. Militants who had fought against the pledge and against piecework rallied behind Walter Reuther in 1946, elected him in place of Thomas, and in a bitter caucus fight in the next years, crushed the Addes-Thomas-Stalinist bloc.

When the CIO was founded, we saw that a united labor officialdom could split in two, with one section leading mass struggles, even violent ones, to establish unionism in the basic industries. The war years were even more instructive. We saw that American unionists, if need be, were ready to cast aside their old leaders and take up the class struggle in new ways.

When the First World War ended, union-busting began. Unions which had enrolled millions of new members were forced back by a successful employers' open-shop drive. But unionism was finally established in the class struggle after the Second World War.

When the war ended in 1945, the union movement was freed of the shackles of the no-strike pledge. The official union leadership called mass strikes in every industry. Instead of going backward, unionism moved forward as millions went on the picket lines in auto, steel, oil, rubber. In these strikes, the leaders sought to make up for the passive war years and it was into these mass movements that the rank-and-file movements of the war years disappeared.

These were the days when unionists showed how little respect they felt for some of the sacrosanct privileges of their employers. "Open the Books," "Wage Increases Without Price Increases"—these slogans of the GM strike of 1945-6 inspired unionists everywhere. The right of employers to the inviolate secrecy of their financial manipulations was challenged; their unilateral right to set prices was called into question. Although these rallying slogans have been shelved, they will be revived.

Now the unions are strong, self-reliant and entrenched. But it is impossible for them to relax in the comfortable enjoyment of class peace.

Employer Offensive

The employing class tolerates unionism because it can do nothing else; but for the last decade, ever since the powerful post-war strike wave, it pushes for government curbs on union power. And it has been successful:

The Taft-Hartley Law holds the threat of government injunction over every mass strike; it imposes political curbs and qualifications on union leaders; it makes it illegal for strikers to vote in NLRB elections, a provision successfully used to smash unions in local cases. An employers' nation-wide "right-to-work" campaign is in full swing, putting over state laws outlawing the union shop. New laws are before Congress to curb the right of unions to participate in election campaigns. What employers cannot achieve in open class struggle on the industrial front they win on the political front.

The class struggle by the employers against the unions continues.

The unions are forced to defend themselves: it is the pressure of its class enemies that impels the AFL and CIO to unite. No class struggle in America? The unity of AFL and CIO tells a different story, as does all of American labor history.

CHAPTER 4

The Inseparables

The Working Class: Bulwark of Democracy

By H. W. BENSON

The fate of the working class depends upon democracy, and the fate of democracy depends upon the working class. This simple truth illuminates all problems of modern politics. Where labor enjoys democracy, it will fight tenaciously to preserve it. Where it has lost democracy, its first goal becomes its restoration.

It is fashionable sometimes to say that we must choose between the "security" of totalitarianism and the "freedom" of capitalism. Nothing could be more deceptive.

For the working class, security and democracy are inseparable. When totalitarianism is imposed upon it, labor loses all control over its own daily life; it is tied to the factory like a slave; it can set no limits to its own exploitation; it loses all control over its own standard of living; it is arbitrarily assigned to work where, when, and how it pleases the dictatorial ruler.

In the first days of Hitler's rule, German trade-union officials deluded themselves that democracy could go and unions remain. They imagined that if they supinely endorsed the dictatorship and closed their eyes to the outlawing of political oppositionists, the organized union movement might continue intact. Such terrible illusions were smashed along with the whole German labor movement as the workers fell victim to the Nazi machine. But never again! The lesson was learned at an awesome price; but never will a free working class again capitulate without a struggle to totalitarianism.

The whole pyramid of social life rests upon the labor of its producers, which in modern society is the working class. Lasting works of art, great musical compositions,



spectacular achievements of science, classics of literature—all are made possible by the toil of millions who provide leisure for the artist, scientist, and writer. But labor makes possible more than the flowering of culture; upon its back rises the exploiting rulers and owners, a small minority that enjoy the luxuries and lush living viewed by others only in dreams.

Property Confers Power

The princes, slave-owners, kings and capitalists possess not only wealth, but what accrues to wealth—social power. By outright purchase or subtle influence, they gather up intellectuals and brains; newspapers and writers; lawyers and lawyer-politicians; teachers and clergymen; judges, prosecutors and police. They own closets full of theatres, televisions, buildings, meeting halls, radio, printing presses, billboards, universities, and comic-book publishing houses.

In the last analysis out of this complex of men, institutions and machines emerges one concentrated summary motto: Labor must remain on the bottom; the owners must remain on top. Let the tides of empire rise and fall, come pestilence and plague, or prosperity give way to poverty, so long as the owners remain owners, they dominate society.

But the working class begins with nothing. By its labor, it makes everything possible; but it, itself, owns neither property nor power. It starts as a mass of impotent objects of exploitation. But one power it does

possess: the power of numbers. In modern nations it is already the majority. But this power remains nothing unless it is organized; without organization, it is blown about like mere dust. In the words of "Solidarity Forever":

"It is we who plowed the prairies,
Built the cities where they trade,
Dug the mines and made the workshops,
Endless miles of railroads laid.
Now we stand outcast and starving
'Mid the wonders we have made,
But the union makes us strong."

The history of the working class is one long stubborn and continuing struggle up from below to rise out of the status of work-oxen to the dignity of human beings. For this it must unite. But to organize it must have the right to meet freely; it must have the right to speak; to publish notices, newspapers; to strike; to vote; to influence government.

In short, it must have democracy or remain enslaved. The working class, by its very nature, must become the champion of democracy. Freedom is no luxury for it, it is a bare necessity determining the workers' life and the fate of his family.

Labor Must Have Democracy

Wherever democracy lives, the working class organizes its political parties, its trade unions, its cooperatives and other institutions. In the United States, unlike almost everywhere else, the organized labor movement is confined almost exclusively to unions. Here, more than 16,000,000 men and women organize to win a better life.

Their unions publish thousands of newspapers, weekly and monthly, reaching millions of readers. Thousands of workers meet in their union halls every month to discuss the affairs of their unions, their conditions of labor, their role as citizens. Their delegates assemble by the thousands to make decisions that can affect not only matters of trade and job but the course of government, foreign policy, war and peace. Last month, 3000 United Auto Workers delegates convened in Cleveland and made decisions that will guide hundreds of thousands of workers in America's biggest industry and will affect other millions. Organized labor, with its federations and its conventions constitutes a parliament of the working class in modern society.

Organized labor stands for democracy but not in full awareness: it is often inconsistent, contradictory, or incomplete in its approach, most strikingly in its defense of the capitalist social system.

In politics, unions are satisfied with little less than full democratic rights; but in the economy they are amazingly modest. A small class of private capitalists own and monopolize America's productive wealth. Powerful as the unions are, they only modify the fringes of capitalist power in industry. But the basic core of arbitrary rule in the economy prevails.

Economic Dictators Decide

A group of economic dictators decide what should be produced, where, at what price, at what time. It decides whether to continue or discontinue production; how many workers to hire, and when; despite the unions, it possesses the initiative in hiring and firing, subject only to minor controls. It decides when to expand productive capacity or contract it. And all these decisions it makes with utter disregard for the needs of workers or of society, motivated by one concern: profit-making.

In politics, labor demands a republic. In the economy, it prefers a limited monarchy, leaving power in the hands of king-capitalist only checked and modified by labor. Unions have yet to demand the end of autocracy in industry and the establishment of full democracy.

Socialism is nothing more than the fullest expansion of democracy, its permeation of every aspect of social life, industry as well as politics. No political princes; no economic dictators. Modern socialism begins with the demand for social and economic democracy; American unionism has not yet consciously gone beyond the demand for political democracy.

The apologists for class rule insisted that political democracy would destroy society under "mob" rule and that a small privileged minority must always hold tightly to the reins of government. Now, these arguments which once seemed so imposing are rejected out of hand. But the apologists for capitalist class rule have little more to offer: the working class, they argue, cannot rule itself democratically; it must be controlled and ordered by an economic elite of owner-capitalists. It is this 20th-century variation on the theme of anti-democracy that holds American labor spellbound!

Wherever the issue is simple and clear, unions are quick to oppose restrictions on civil liberties and arbitrary state controls. They fought poll taxes; they reject the Taft-Hartley Law with its affidavits; they resist curbs on the right to strike; they stand against state licensing of union organizers.

But things are not always so simple. For at least ten years, democracy in America has been eroding. By law, by bureaucratic decree, by official and private intimidation, free speech has been curbed and the spirit of liberty undermined. The Age of Conformity ushers in the American Party Line.

With the Tide

At first, organized labor went with the tide. It seemed, then, that all this was aimed merely at the Communist Party, and labor was content. Besides, the first beginnings were made under Roosevelt with the Smith Act and under Truman with the "loyalty" program. The unions could not allow themselves to believe that such liberal friends of theirs were chipping away at democracy.

But with time, the full outlines of the danger became clearer; when the cry of "treason" was leveled even against the Democratic Party, labor was alerted. Liberals, New-Dealers, union militants were falling victim. The settling mood of cringing subservience was endangering a labor movement which could thrive only if dissent was encouraged, not repressed.

In Flint, Michigan, several General Motors workers reputed to be Communist Party members refused to testify before a congressional committee. A group of hysterical, miseducated workers virtually threw them out of the plants. The local capitalist press applauded this act of anti-democratic violence and drew this ominous lesson: That's the way to handle communists, it gloated, and that's the way to handle sit-in strikers if need be!

Unions are learning how the mood of anti-democracy quickly spills over into anti-unionism. In the "loyalty" and "security" program, union activists are victimized. If "communism" is outlawed, there are hundreds of feeble-minded local politicians who remember that unionism is really "communism." If "subversion" is to be invented and rooted out, compliant corporation apologists discover that unionism subverts the institutions of "free enterprise."

Sound the Alarm

The witchhunt smog stifles the spirit of unionism and a wave of revulsion against the witchhunt begins in the labor movement. Unions begin to speak out against the excesses and arbitrariness of the security program. The most socially conscious unions sound the alarm against the whole anti-democratic drift.

"The ten-year period since the end of World War II," reads the resolution adopted by the UAW convention's Resolutions Committee, "has witnessed a series of unparalleled assaults upon the Bill of Rights which threaten to undermine the basic liberties upon which our country and our labor movements have grown strong."



Unionism flourishes only on the soil of democracy. Where productive wealth is concentrated in the hands of a small class, democracy is in danger and can be defended only by the organized resistance of organized millions from below. It is the working class which possesses that organization.

For a hundred years, democracy in the United States depended upon the independent farmer, the majority class in a predominantly agricultural country. But that era has gone. With the rise of modern industry, the formation of monopolies and the concentration of production in the hands of rich capitalists, this petty-bourgeois democracy of the independent producer was defeated. For a time, American politics degenerated into a private game for wardheelers, bought and paid by big money; and the courts, the legislatures, the executive offices became the blatantly subservient tools of the rich.

Power of the Working Class

It was the rise of organized labor that refurbished democracy in the United States. It is true that unions remain tied to capitalist politics; in actuality they function as a wing of the Democratic Party in collaboration with so-called liberal bourgeois politicians. Even thus weighted down, they have succeeded in making politics the battleground for decisive social questions. Every office-holder, every candidate reckons with the power of the organized working class.

When McCarthy was riding high, some gloomy forecasters saw this country on the threshold of fascism. Now that McCarthy has retired to the shadows, some people might fear the rise of totalitarianism without him, a "McCarthyism" without McCarthy. In the steady accumulation of anti-democratic practices are we drifting into dictatorship? All such calculations omit what is quintessential: organized labor.

We live in a democracy, a capitalist democracy that has been whittled down and enfeebled, but a kind of democracy nevertheless. The working class, powerfully organized and undefeated, stands as the limit to anti-democracy. We cannot "glide" from democracy into dictatorship. Those who would try to crush democracy must first try to crush labor. And should any such struggle begin, we are confident that labor and democracy would win.

What Socialists Want In the Trade Unions

By ALLAN LAWRENCE

Trade unions are first formed to achieve simple aims: to win higher wages, to seek shorter hours, to improve working conditions. But these simple goals are only the beginning. As unions become stronger, as the working class becomes larger, new and far more complicated tasks are forced upon them. In common with all thinking militants in the labor movement, socialists try to understand the connection between the original basic aims of the trade unions and the broader problems which concern organized labor.

Historically, socialists have always been among the most active organizers of the trade union movement. (There have been quaint cases of misguided socialistic sects who viewed the active role of other socialists in the unions with misgivings or outright hostility. But this was a queer aberration in the main line of socialist development.) In some countries, powerful socialist parties existed before the appearance of strong trade unions; there, socialists took the lead as the founders of trade unionism. Socialism and unionism are the two main interflowing streams that form the modern labor movement. Only in the United States, distinct in this respect from every other democratic nation, is the labor movement confined exclusively to the union movement.

A Driving, Unifying Force

Socialists are not merely sympathizers or mild supporters of the labor movement. They look to the organized working class as the class that will lead society to peace and freedom, a not unambitious view! In organizing the working class, unions perform a task that no other institution can accomplish as fully. On the job, at the machine, or bench they organize the working class to defend its most basic, elementary and continuing interests. The worker rises early in the morning to rush to work. He returns toward evening. The best part of his mature life is spent at the job. The union is as important as the work-day; through it, the worker fights to live through these long days in human dignity; and he stands with his union to examine and oversee the conditions under which he works. This is the common concern of all workers and cuts through every distinction and difference. It is a driving, unifying force that brings the working class together, regardless of race, regardless of politics, regardless of religion.

The best unions have always tried to organize the broadest sections of the working class and in the socialist view, the labor movement as a whole must try to bring in the vast majority of the class. The closer the union movement becomes identified with the majority of the working class, the more it tends to become a class, labor movement. Socialists have always fought for the formation of industrial unions to organize the mass production industries because they want the broadest and most powerful form of union organization. Today, this principle is a mere commonplace. But before the rise of the CIO, it was the socialists together with sympathizing union activists who carried on the task of educating the union ranks to the need for industrial organization. And oftentimes, they were vilified, expelled, and fired for standing up for industrial unionism. In the end, their view proved correct.

Against Discrimination!

And because they view the unions as an organizing backbone for the whole working class, socialists seek to eradicate every last vestige of race discrimination and prejudice in the labor movement. Negroes and other minorities must be admitted to full and equal membership in every trade and every industry; they must receive every chance to be promoted into the skilled trades and to receive apprenticeships; and they are entitled to equal pay for equal work, equality in seniority and other job rights. And the unions, in unifying the working-class, must strive to eradicate discrimination not only within its own house, and on the job, but everywhere in society. The white worker will remain enslaved so long as the Negro is an object of discrimination. On this count, the labor movement has made many strides forward. The CIO has always outlawed discrimination; now the united labor movement proposes to move in the same direction. Socialists stand for the most thoroughgoing enforcement of the union position against discrimination and support the formation of special Fair Employment Committees inside the unions to carry it out.

If the union movement is to organize and unify the working class with all its divergencies, with its differing national origins, differences in race and religion and politics, it must be deeply and sincerely democratic. Democracy permits the voluntary coexistence of all tendencies in the working class on a free, voluntary basis. Socialists, as consistent defenders of democracy, oppose every and all racial, religious, or political qualification for union membership.

It is easy to be a democrat in theory but a little harder in practice. Socialists defest the program and principles of the Communist Party. We were the first to warn the labor movement against Stalinism, even when America's leading labor officials were collaborating with it in the

unions. But, however much we hate their views we defend their democratic right to maintain them, and oppose disabilities against members of the CP in the unions; we defend their democratic right to speak, to maintain membership, and to hold office. At the same time, socialists campaign against their political views and seek everywhere to defeat them in elections.

Democracy is a need of all society. But in the unions it is indispensable if they are to remain loyal to the working class and dedicated to its interests. With the best will in the world, union officials (like officials everywhere) tend to rise above the working class, to climb into higher pay brackets, to win status and security denied the average worker, to escape from the strain and monotony of factory life, and to form a closed machine-corporation in the union with common bureaucratic interests. Democracy acts as a counterweight to this tendency; but not just democracy as a system of formal, constitutional rules, but living, spirited, fighting democracy. Socialists stand for democracy inside the unions, for real democracy; for the right to form organized caucuses and groups to press for changes in policy and program or to change the union leadership.

The biggest shortcoming of American unionism is its lack of full democracy. Only a few unions tolerate organized dissent; most labor officials expel opposition groups out of hand.

Against Racketeering!

Racketeering is recognized as a deadly cancer on the body of organized labor. Naturally, socialists like all good unionists want to destroy corruption and keep unions clean. Nothing can be more despicable than those who would turn the union from a noble, liberating institution into an organized grafting machine. The best antidote to racketeering is democracy; a membership that defends and retains its democratic rights against every attempt to infringe upon them. Such a membership will be able to fight off racketeering. But where democracy is destroyed or turned into a shallow form, the union is helpless before every bureaucracy, honest and dishonest. To keep the unions clean, socialists propose to keep them democratic.

Those who are afraid of democracy argue that the unions cannot tolerate caucuses within them because they must remain "united" against the bosses. But unity does not mean unanimity. If a union is to remain in the hands of the membership and not become the plaything of a clique it must allow full democracy.

The significance of democracy becomes more marked when we consider the deeper meaning of unionism, as examined from the socialist view and as revealed in actual life. So far, we have mentioned the unions in two aspects:

1. As fighting organizations of the working class.
2. As a democratic assembly of the working class, representing all its wings and varieties.

Pure and Simple Unionism

The unions begin by fighting for wages, hours, and conditions. But is that all there is to unionism? One philosophy, now almost obsolete if not extinct, came to be known as "pure and simple trade unionism." It held that unions should concentrate solely and exclusively on the problems of the job and trade; it sneered at long range goals; it minimized politics; above all it opposed support to any party, least of all to a labor party.

In the socialist view, such "pure and simple" unionism is not only shortsighted and narrow; it would render unions incapable of facing reality. Socialists advocate the most active participation of unions in politics; labor needs unions but it also needs its own political party. Of course, socialists want labor to form a socialist party but at the very least, the unions should found their own labor party. And of course, once labor has its own party, it must adopt a platform dealing with all the issues of the day and seek to win the people to its side so that it can win the majority.

The arguments that raged between these two points of view in the past can be ignored because real life has so effectively exploded "pure and simple" unionism. AFL and CIO alike are deep in politics. They have not formed a party but they have set up their own political organizations, the PAC and LLPE. And these political organizations are compelled to speak out on every question; and they must try to get the support of all the people. The CIO and AFL remain tied to capitalist politics and support capitalist candidates. But the issue is no longer: politics or no-politics. It is bourgeois politics or working class politics.

For Social Democracy!

Unions today stand for political democracy; socialists propose that they go further and fight for social democracy as well. Society cannot be truly democratic when a small, minority of capitalists monopolizes ownership and control of industry and grasps the lion's share of wealth and industry. Political democracy and industrial autocracy are incompatible. Toward the great ideal of social democracy, the extension of democracy into every sphere of life especially into industry,

the trade unions have an inspiring role to play. Even within present day capitalist society, they have won for the workers a share in control over industry. Through unions, shop committees, plant elections, grievance procedure one gets a glimpse into the rudiments of controlling industry. The union can become the most effective instrument in preparing the working class to run industry.

The socialist view on unions can be summarized as follows:

1. For the formation of free and independent unions to fight to raise the standards of the working class.
2. For organization of the whole class without discrimination.
3. For full democracy including the right to form democratic caucuses.
4. For equal rights to Negroes and all minorities inside the unions and for defense of their rights in society.
5. For political action through the formation of a labor party.
6. For full democracy in society; for democracy in industry by the socialization of industry under workers' control.

The ISL Program in Brief

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

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

Stalinism, in Russia and wherever it holds power, is a brutal totalitarianism—a new form of exploitation. Its agents in every country, the Communist Parties, are unrelenting enemies of socialism—which cannot exist without effective democratic control by the people.

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

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

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

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

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CHAPTER 6

Enemy Within

The Stalinist Threat To Labor and Unions

By ALBERT GATES

Confusion and ignorance on the nature of the Stalinist phenomenon penetrates all areas of contemporary political activity. If that is true of the summits of political rule in the West and elsewhere, it is just as true of most of the labor movements of the world.

The confusion, ignorance and, above all, perplexity of the bourgeois world in meeting the challenge of Stalinism, has understandable class roots. It looks upon the Stalinist world solely as a revolutionary threat to capitalism. And the bourgeoisie is correct in looking on Stalinism as a threat to itself, even though it fails just the same to understand the underlying pressures for Stalinist expansion and prefers to think of the movement on the basis of outlived ideas rather than intelligent analysis.

To the bourgeoisie, Stalinism represents an "extreme" form of socialism (doesn't it call itself socialist?), based on the threatened violence of willful and malicious men, in contrast to the more venerable and reasonable socialism of the reformist type with whom it was always possible to get along in one fashion or another.

The labor movements of most countries of the West, even the more sophisticated of them, are confused about Stalinism. And while they may—quite often do—regard the phenomenon as a modern slavery, they have no clarity on the subject.

No Clarity on Stalinism

The influence of the reformist socialists on the labor movement has not helped to establish any clarity in the Western labor movement. If this is true of Europe, what can one say about the American labor movement which is so undeveloped ideologically?

The American labor movement has, indeed, inflicted a serious defeat upon the Stalinists in this country. The Stalinists have been thoroughly isolated, though they control several small unions outside of the main union constellation. But their defeat has not been the result of an ideological struggle. It occurred simultaneously with the government drive against Stalinism on grounds that seriously threaten the civil liberties of all genuinely socialist, radical and non-conformist movements and individuals.

In brief, the annihilating defeat of American Stalinism was achieved through bureaucratic means in a period which saw the decline of the Communist Party in general. No great ideological victory was won over Stalinism—neither by the bourgeoisie nor by the labor leadership. The victory was gained by an appeal, not to any lofty ideals, but to a chauvinistic and reactionary combination of ideas, arising out of the cold war. The victory was gained by riding on the same witchhunting swell that produced McCarthyism and the Truman-to-Eisenhower loyalty purges.

The same success, achieved here precisely because of the unique position of the United States in the world, its continued economic power and geographic isolation (as well as ideological isolation), has not been duplicated elsewhere in the world. For while the United States can and does avoid the enormous economic and political pressures of other countries, particular in Asia, these other countries are not able so easily to solve more simple economic and political problems, upon which Stalinism feeds like a social cancer.

A Revolutionary Movement

Stalinism is a kind of revolutionary movement in the sense that it seeks to replace capitalism, though its replacement is a new form of totalitarian tyranny. Its anti-capitalism is its great strength in a world divided into an economically unhealthy West and a semi-capitalist and colonial world, the latter containing the vast majority of the world's population. Stalinism champions the restive masses of these countries in their struggles for independence, and above all, in their desire for land reform. And it does this, while the West still presents itself to this great part of the world as the advocate of colonialism, a dying colonialism to be sure, but a colonialism, nevertheless.

Certainly, Stalinism offers these great masses of the West and East a leap from the exploitation of capitalism and imperialism into the exploitation of the modern slave society. But many people do not see this as clearly as they see the older evils of capitalism.

They see the skillful Stalinist propaganda in their behalf. They see and hear the Stalinist slogans of liberation and land reform. It is this they do not see or hear from the West—not from the United States, allied as it is with all the reactionary feudal elements of Asia fighting land reform; not from "enlightened" Great Britain; and certainly not from the smaller empires, France, Belgium, Spain, who hang onto their colonies with a deadly grip.

Thus, Stalinism is enabled to appear to the world as the champion of the oppressed. In industrial countries, its parties have the "tradition" of working-class organizations; these parties are considered by many to be part of the working class. This is the mistake of reactionaries, progressives, labor leaders and many socialists alike.

Again, the basis for this belief is to be found in the "revolutionary" nature of Stalinism. But Stalinism is revolutionary only because it seeks the destruction of capitalism. We have, however, also said that it is reactionary, because it seeks the replacement of capitalism with the totalitarian system of bureaucratic collectivism, the modern slave society.

Anti-Working Class

One need only look at Russia to see what it means to say that Stalinism is anti-socialist and anti-working-class. No new name for the working class has as yet been invented or employed to describe the Russian proletariat. Russian workers have been called slaves—modern industrial slaves. But that hardly suffices to describe their economic role. The Russian worker is at the mercy of the state and the state party.



The Communist Party is not his party; it is the party of the bureaucracy. There is no other party for him because this is a one-party state.

He has no unions unless you accept the cynicism of the Russian rulers and consider the state-controlled and directed "unions" as genuine coin.

He has no organizations he can call his own.

He cannot leave his job and seek another. He cannot bargain with his bosses.

This is sufficient to indicate how different is his class position from that of the workers of the West.

The unique position of the Russian slave workers should indicate, then, the nature of the Stalinist movements abroad with respect to the working class.

Our movement has described Stalinism as "a reactionary, totalitarian, anti-bourgeois and anti-proletarian current IN the labor movement but not OF the labor movement," and as a product of the social crisis of our time.

Stalinism is not a "left" wing of the labor movement, or a "right" wing, as some believe. There is a gulf between Stalinism and "all sections of the labor movement."

Stalinism is not a working-class movement, nor any wing of a working-class movement. We say this not because it has a bad program or a wrong one, but because it represents the anti-proletarian class interests of the bureaucratic ruling class of the Russian empire.

The working class is simply an object of manipulation by Stalinism. The entire history of Stalinism bears this out. The Communist movements controlled and directed from the Kremlin have been the witting (sometimes unwitting) instruments of Great-Russian Stalinism. The national and international interests of Stalinist Russia are what determined and continues to determine the strategies and tactics of its world movement.

The Line Changes

From the radical "Third Period" of Stalinism in the first half of the '30s—which divided the world into two simple camps, Stalinists on the one hand and fascists on the other—to the policy of "collective security"; from the Hitler-Stalin pact and the invasion of Poland and Finland, to the no-strike pledge; from opposition to the war, to its most fanatical prosecutors—through all this the Stalinist movements were dragged into a maze

of ever-changing policies, none of them designed to advance the interests of the working class, the labor movements, socialism and human society, one step forward.

Of more recent memory, we have only to recall the war years. Certainly the American labor movement should remember it well. For in the beginning, while Stalin was in partnership with Hitler, the slogans resounded from coast to coast: "Down with Imperialist War!" "The Yanks Are Not Coming!" "March on Washington!" "Demonstrate for Peace!" "Strike for your Rights!"

These slogans were repeated in similar form, with due regard to different national conditions, in all Allied countries. But overnight, without a moment's warning or hesitation, Stalinist world strategy and tactics changed. Hitler's march into Russia transformed the latter into a Western ally and at once the world Stalinist movement became the most rabid super-patriots and partisans of the war.

Anti-Union War Record

Everything was now subordinated to the war effort, seemingly to the war effort of the Allied nations, but actually to the war effort of Russia, to which all else was auxiliary.

• In the United States, the Communist Party demanded that all unions pledge not to strike for the duration, no matter what the reason, and it was the most adamant supporter of the no-strike pledge against even conservative labor opponents of it.

• The Stalinists championed the reintroduction of incentive-pay schemes in industry and demanded the restoration of piecework in industry where it had long ago been abolished.

• They whipped their unions into line in behalf of the war effort and expelled workers whom they believed did not work hard or fast enough.

• They denounced the "March on Washington" movement which was initiated by Negro leaders as a means of expressing the struggle for civil rights and against discrimination in industry and the armed forces, and which forced Roosevelt to set up FEPC to head it off.

• They cautioned colonial peoples to abandon their fight for independence—especially those peoples who were the colonials of the Allies.

And when the war was over, we witnessed just as abrupt a turn, this time in behalf of the imperialist-expansionist policy of Stalinist Russia.

The turns of the Communist Parties never originated in the needs of the working classes anywhere, not even in mistaken or distorted understanding of those working-class needs. They originated in the Kremlin, and the policies around which the movement of these turns began were based solely upon the needs of Russia's new ruling class to maintain and extend its power.

Aspirations for Power

Today, however, the Stalinist social system is no longer confined to Russia. There is a Stalinist empire in being. So that while it is true to say that the Communist Parties serve the interests of the Kremlin, they also serve still another interest: their own aspirations for power, to become a ruling class in the image of the Russian.

Stalinism has to be fought not merely as the agent of the Russian ruling class, but also as the would-be imposers of a Stalinist regime here at home, where it would seek to rule in the same totalitarian police-state manner, with the same methods and social objectives that obtain in the lands of the Kremlin.

The satellite countries of Europe offer one image of the new slave state; China and North Vietnam another. Their basic characteristics, however, are the same.

They are all totalitarian states based on a new bureaucratic exploitation; they are all anti-proletarian; they are all anti-socialist.

The fight against Stalinism, however, cannot be won by military or bureaucratic means so long as capitalist exploitation, oppression, and imperialism abound. The fight against Stalinism has to be fought upon political grounds, and those grounds can only be a progressive social program, a genuine socialist program of peace, security and freedom, which alone can offer the peoples a democratic alternative to Stalinism which is at the same time a revolutionary alternative to capitalism.

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CHAPTER 7

Independent Political Action

The Next Step: Labor's Own Party

By MAX MARTIN

"We live in a world where everybody is bound to take care of himself. Yet the English working class allows the landlord, capitalist, and retail trading classes, with their tail of lawyers, newspaper writers, etc., to take care of its interests. No wonder reforms in the interests of the workman come so slow and in such miserable dribbles. The working people of England have but to will, and they are the masters to carry every reform, social and political, which their situation requires. Then why not make that effort?"

The question with which Frederick Engels ended his article "A Workingmen's Party," from which the above sentences are quoted, and which he directed to the British workers in 1881, can no longer be relevantly asked of them. It is the American proletariat and its economic institutions, the trade unions, which are called upon to supply an answer to this cogent query.

The English workers proclaimed their declaration of political independence from the capitalists 50 years ago and have had their own political party since that time. In the United States alone out of all modern countries in the world do we find the workers without a political party; only in this country do the workers continue to give political support to a party of their class enemy.

The American labor movement has yet to assert this elementary condition of dignity. It may grumble privately at what its "friends" in the councils of government are doing, and from time to time it may even grumble publicly. But when election time rolls around, the Democratic Party knows that, no matter who its candidates and what its program, no matter how it has disregarded the interests of labor during the preceding four years, still the trade unions will support it and campaign for it and give it their votes.

This is one of the facets of the political underdevelopment of the American workers, which contrasts so sharply with their frequent combativeness in economic struggles. The historical roots of this situation have already been explained in another article in this issue.

Labor Parties Attempted

To be sure, attempts at labor party formation were made. Many times throughout the 19th century local and regional groups of workers formed political parties and launched candidates for office. But these were almost always isolated local affairs of a transient character. Or else they were the efforts of groups of workers, sometimes new immigrant workers, alienated from the mainstream of the American working class. Their character was in many ways similar to that of the various socialist groupings and parties in this period.

The character of the labor movement's attitude toward politics in this country was best summed up in Gompers' famous phrase: "Reward your friends and punish your enemies." Day-by-day participation of the workers in politics was excluded; on election day, the trade unions would urge their members to vote for this capitalist candidate and against that one. These "recommendations" of labor were almost always confined to municipal and state elections.

From a narrow point of view, this policy could be said to correspond to the interests of the then trade-union movement. If a local craft union in the building trades was concerned that its members should have jobs, wasn't one way of achieving this to get the workers to vote for that candidate for alderman who would promise to have the construction of a new Municipal Building turned over to a builder with whom the union had contract? And if the concern of the craft unions of the AFL was solely with municipal and state politics rather than national politics, didn't this correspond to the fact that what the unions wanted out of politics was safety regulations and factory legislation for the industries it organized, and these could be more easily satisfied in the municipal councils and state legislatures?

The Narrow View

To be sure this meant ignoring the needs and interests of the broader, unorganized working class, not to speak of society as a whole, but the narrow craft unions were concerned only with the interests of the "aristocratic" dues-payers enrolled in their ranks.

The vast change which has occurred in the political life of the American working class in the last few years followed the creation of the CIO, that is, of industrial unionism. Naturally therefore, the first manifestations of a new attitude toward politics occurred in the CIO.

From the very beginning it intervened in national political life, indicating its preferences in presidential elections. And unlike the AFL, in which many leaders are supporters of the Republican Party, it was from the beginning the supporter of the Democratic Party and of Roosevelt's New Deal, of that party which seemed to it to be the party of political and social re-

form, the party of liberalism. That its attitude toward politics was serious could be seen by the role which John L. Lewis' support to the Republicans in 1940 played in his resignation from the office of CIO president, and the subsequent withdrawal of the Miners from the CIO.

Hand-in-hand with these attitudes went the creation of trade-union political machines. In the 1936 presidential elections there was created, as part of the wave which produced the CIO, Labor's Non-Partisan League, which in contrast to the old Gompers policy of endorsing this or that capitalist candidate mobilized the workers for cohesive action in the elections.

PAC and LLPE are Born

The creation of the CIO Political Action Committee for the 1944 elections signified the establishment of a more permanent political machine under the direct control of the more progressive of the two labor federations of the country, for permanent participation in all phases of political life. In the 11 years of its existence, PAC has grown and strengthened itself, has established branches in local wards and precincts, has in many areas taken over or become the mainstay of the machine of the Democratic Party, and has played a decisive role in many elections, including the 1948 election of Truman to the presidency.

The AFL, reluctantly perhaps, but nevertheless, followed suit, in correspondence with the growth of industrial unionism in its ranks. In 1952 its endorsement of a presidential candidate—the Democratic candidate at that—for the first time in its history, not counting the 1924 support it gave to LaFollette, marked a turning-point for it, as had its earlier creation of its own political machine, Labor's League for Political Education.

With these developments has gone a broadening of labor's political horizons. The two labor federations concern themselves today with all political and social questions, lobby actively for all types of legislation, including those not within the purview of the immediate narrow interests of the workers, operate on all political levels, and do so on a day-to-day basis.

The organization of millions of workers in the mass-production industries necessarily multiplied the political and social problems of the labor movement manifold. This situation, plus the ever-increasing intervention of the government into all phases of life, particularly the economy, created a condition in which labor saw many gains which it had won on the picket lines taken away in the halls of government. Indifference to politics was no longer possible.

Progressive Developments

These developments are progressive ones, but nonetheless they remain confined within a reactionary context. The political machines and activity of the trade unions serve one capitalist party, the Democratic Party; PAC and LLPE are machines which can form the basis of an independent labor party but today are instruments for the election of capitalist politicians. They are labor machines which the labor movement has placed at the disposal of one of the political parties of the capitalist class.



Not that the labor leaders are as enthusiastic about the Democratic Party as they were during the heyday of the New Deal or that they are very sanguine about the possibilities of that party enacting labor's program. But out of timidity and conservatism and on the basis of mistaken ideas, they continue to tie labor to the Democratic Party. This timidity and conservatism reflect the comparative prosperity of the workers and the comparative absence of sharp social and class struggle.

The labor movement would not even consider the idea of economic organizations which enrolled the workers and bosses together. But they continue to organize in the same political party with the bosses and the representatives of the bosses. As justification for this they give the shopworn arguments of the "lesser-evil": *If labor formed its own party, the Republicans would win and labor's influence and prestige in the government would disappear. Those few wretched reforms which trickle down to us from the Democrats would end and the reactionaries would take over the country, with all of its consequent evil for the workers.*

Leaving aside the facts that labor's influence in the government is negligible today under Eisenhower, and yesterday under Truman got labor nothing, and that the reforms which the Democrats are able to give labor are trivial in nature and grow fewer every day, the fact is that labor's lack of independence contributes heavily to its low influence and the paucity of its political gains.

Every member of a trade-union negotiating committee knows that the way to get a good contract is to be tough and militant during negotiations, to make large-scale demands and be prepared to fight for them. The trade-unionist who begins contract negotiations by asking for next to nothing, and informing management that the union will sign the contract regardless of whether management agrees even to its tiny demands, would get nothing. But the labor movement as a whole acts in just this way when it comes to politics.

A Show of Independence

A show of independence on labor's part and the formation of an independent labor party would result in an increase, not in a decrease, of its influence and gains. The creation of a labor party would put the capitalists and their political representatives on the defensive and force them to give more consideration to the needs and demands of the workers than they do today.

British labor had to go through such experiences too. Anti-picketing laws in the early 1870s had made the English workers take up independent political action in 1874. And sure enough, as a result, Gladstone's Liberal Party (*read the Democrats*) was defeated and the Tories (*read the Republicans*) were elected. The very next year the Tories repealed the anti-picketing laws and passed other pro-labor legislation including a broadening of the franchise. An accident? Hardly.

Even from the narrow view, militant independence by labor is the best way to squeeze the most concessions out of the present powers-that-be. And the new unity of the AFL and CIO eliminates the argument that labor's split makes a political party of its own unfeasible.

That a labor party will come to the United States should be doubted by no one, despite the fact that a clear-cut movement toward it is not now present. America cannot and will not escape the historical development to which every capitalist country is subject. All sharpenings of the class struggle, an economic recession, a major debacle for America in international events, as extension of the witchhunt to the labor movement, an intensified war danger, or a squeeze by the war economy on the living standards of the workers, can produce a movement for a labor party.

And despite today's economic prosperity, the long-time trends of the war economy involve a cutting of the workers' living standards and an elimination of the gains which the workers have achieved. This long-range prospect and the shorter-range economic and political vicissitudes which the workers face, can produce an intensification of social conflict and of political antagonisms.

What is certain is that an independent labor party will arise. Independent Socialists will look sympathetically upon all developments in the labor movement toward its creation and will participate to the best of their ability in such developments with the aim of deepening and sharpening the struggle so that a party of the workers may come sooner, rather than later, and have a stronger program, rather than a weaker one.

The creation of an independent labor party will only be the first step. That step will have to be followed by a struggle for a socialist program for the labor party, and a struggle for that party to take power in the nation. It is the beginning of the road which leads the working class to take command of the nation with a program to reorganize society on a socialist—which is to say, on a democratic—basis. But this first step will not, given the current political situation in the country, be a small one; it will represent a tremendous leap forward for the workers and for all of society.

The Time Is Now

The time for that step is now. As Engels said in the same article from which we have quoted above:

"And yet there never was a more widespread feeling . . . than now that the old parties are doomed, that the old shibboleths have become meaningless, that the old watchwords are exploded, that the old panaceas will not act any longer. Thinking men of all classes begin to see that a new line must be struck out, and that this line can only be in the direction of democracy. But . . . democracy means the dominion of the working class, neither more nor less. Let, then, that working class prepare itself for the task in store for it—the ruling of this great empire; let them understand the responsibilities which inevitably will fall to their share. And the best way to do this is to use the power already in their hands, the actual majority they possess in every large town in the kingdom, to send to Parliament men of their own order."

Labor: Key to a Better World — —

(Continued from page 1)

every day the advantages of pooled effort, and the subordination of the interests of an individual to the needs of the group.

It does not teach this lesson equally to all workers: it is plainer for assembly-line workers in the mass-production industries than for (say) an office secretary who takes dictation from a personal boss, who works *with* a boss rather than *with* fellow workers. We use this simple example so that that reader can himself imagine the various degrees of "education" which the conditions of capitalism grant to different kinds of workers, and link these various degrees up with the social ideologies which arise from these different strata of workers, simply on the basis of this first point: class organization.

(2) The interests of workers as a solidarized group, organized by capitalism, lead them to *struggle*.

This is the whole theme of the article on page 3, and so we can pass over it briefly here. What that article will emphasize so clearly is that this can take place quite apart from the conscious desires and wishes of the labor leaders themselves.

Labor leaders, who have risen from the ranks of lowly workers and aspire to be accepted as respectable and responsible members of bourgeois society, often want to substitute pleasant and friendly conferences with management for any kind of conflict. Having freed themselves from the condition of existence to which the mass of workers are condemned, they are "bourgeoisified," they want to integrate themselves into the ruling class, or at least find as respectable a niche there as a corporation lawyer.

And indeed they could do so—so many others do!—if not for the fact that it is the working class that they are standing on in order to reach so high. For the working class needs representatives in order to oppose the bosses' interests; but the bosses accept the friendship of these labor leaders only insofar as they "behave," from below these bourgeoisified bureaucrats, there always arises the pressure of mass demands, the unslakable needs of the workers which cannot be wished away with fine talk about class-collaboration, the aspirations steaming up from the depths of the class for delivery of the goods.

Class Struggle Instruments

Some bureaucrats can continue their precarious balancing-act for substantial periods, in "normal" times of class quiet particularly, as everybody knows; but even the most conservative and most bourgeoisified union leader must to some extent satisfy the class needs of his constituent base, or else—. This is in the worst case, of course, and there are not a few such "worst" cases in the bourgeoisified labor bureaucracy of this country.

But it is by no means the typical case even here. Timidly or militantly, consistently or hesitantly, competently or crudely, even the conservative union leader who does not "believe" in class struggle *must* be its instrument to the extent that he functions as a labor leader at all.

(3) The directions of the workers' organized struggle inevitably tends to be *against* capitalism—or, to put it more finely, this struggle always tends to go outside the framework of capitalist institutions and ideas.

Steadily the labor movement's insistence on social responsibility for all aspects of life comes in conflict with the capitalist insistence on the rights of private property. For the essence of capitalist private-property relations is that this whole area of man's life—the economic sphere—is to be withdrawn from the rule of social responsibility and is to be ruled by the unilateral power of capital, as its birthright.

Many are the compromises that capitalism has been forced into here, as is well known, the compromise being mainly that (a) the state is accorded power to intervene as representative of "society," provided (b) that the associated capitalist class retain full control of this intervening state. (This is the process of "statification" under capitalism in a nutshell.) But whatever the compromises, the working-class movement—even the undeveloped union-conscious labor movement of this country—can never be satisfied.

Social Responsibility

Its best sections (UAW, for example) raise slogans like trade-union intervention in the setting of prices or in peering over the capitalists' books to check their profit. In periods of intense class struggle, sit-downs take over the factories without a qualm over the rights of private property. The tendency of the unions in politics is to support federal controls all the way down the line—over offshore oil, or natural gas, or prices, or the Salk vaccine, or health insurance, etc.—in the name of social responsibility vs. private property. Insofar as this support of "statification" takes place without concomitant insistence on control by a social democracy, this is indeed labor's contribution to the bureaucratization of capitalism, rather than its democratization.

But given a socialist framework it is this insistence on social responsibility vs. private property which is the germ of the labor movement's inherent and ineradicable "creeping socialism."

The intuition of the reactionaries is not altogether baseless in this respect, though wildly exaggerated and viciously directed. Even Samuel Gompers used to argue that his simple slogan of "More!" for the labor movement was a more "revolutionary" slogan than anything the socialists offered. And surely it is true that, insofar as labor incessantly presses for "more" out of the economic pie for itself, even when decent wages are incompatible with capitalist needs; insofar as labor presses for "more" social responsibility and less rule by private profit; insofar as labor presses in this direction without drawing back when the capitalists yell too violently, to this extent labor drives the logic of its own existence outside the bounds of the capitalist framework, and tends to explode it.

Of course, we socialists would maintain, and experience unanimously shows, that this does not happen except when the working-class movement grows up to adopting socialist leadership and program; but all we are stressing in the present connection is that the class conditions and needs and interests of the workers drive their organized movement, in the course of its struggle, right up against the bounds of the capitalist system.

This is not true of any other group in society—only of individuals from other classes, who may decide to throw in their lot with the working-class struggle. It is enlightening, for example to make a study of the type of political program com-

monly adopted by non-working-class parties which set out to express protest and struggle: radical peasant parties, or urban parties appealing to the middle class, or farmers' parties in the U. S.

Peasant parties most typically stop well short of proposing the abolition of capitalism, confining themselves to proposals for improving their class's lot in ways compatible with the rule of private property; for the peasant is a very tenacious small private-property-holder himself, and does not easily see beyond this question.

In a quite different kind of case, as in the case of the Nazi appeal to middle-class elements, a kind of pseudo-anti-capitalism was patched up by directing slogans against bank capital as distinct from "good" productive capital; or, as in the case of Henry Wallace's program, supporting "progressive" capitalists against "reactionary" capitalists.

But what is noteworthy is this: only in the case of working-class parties, all over the world, does the program and goal of the movement turn fast or slow toward a basic assault on the bastions of the capitalist system itself.

Now obviously not all American readers will consider this inherent turn of proletarian parties toward anti-capitalism as necessarily a good thing in itself, nor are we arguing this point at the moment. The fact itself is what we point to, as illuminating the "special role of the working class," for the benefit of so many Americans who cannot see that the working class as a class can and does play any special role whatsoever.

Courage, Boldness, Militancy

(4) The conditions and interests of the working class not only push it toward organized struggle against capitalism but impel it toward a *courage and boldness and militancy* which are well nigh unique to it, at critical moments of struggle when these qualities are called for.

Now at first blush this may seem to be in contradiction with our earlier statements that workers are not necessarily personally "better" in any sense. Are we now saying that workers are braver and bolder?

Only with the same qualifications previously explained. We are talking about their potentialities as an organized class—plus perhaps, for many individuals whatever carry-over takes place from organized behavior to personal behavior as a result of education and conditioning in life situations. But it is the class behavior we are interested in.

Stereotypes are bad, including class stereotypes, but while we should avoid them we should not ignore the kernels of truth that they often contain (and, containing, exaggerate). Thus: there is the "timid professor." We have known many professors not at all personally timid. Yet the sweeping stereotype contains a kernel of truth about the impact of academic life and its pressures upon the social psychology of professors.

In the last chapter of his *White Collar*, a study of the middle class in America, Professor (non-timid variety) C. Wright Mills draws a generalized picture of the new middle class which, as it happens, was also quoted in our last week's issue of *Challenge* in connection with a study of student types. Here it is again, in our present connection, as summarized by Debbie Meier.

The new middle class are the "rearguarders," says Mills, waiting for someone else to move. As a group they have no cohesion, but are on sale to the highest bidder or the most likely winner. They have no steady discontent or responsible struggle with the conditions of their lives. For discontent of this sort requires imagination, even a little vision; and responsible struggle requires leadership."

As individuals with private positions, continues Mills, "they hesitate, confused and vacillating in their opinions, unfocused and discontinuous in their actions . . . they have no targets on which to focus their worry and distrust. They may be politically irritable, but they have no political passion. They are a chorus, too afraid to grumble, too hysterical in their applause." In the short run, he concludes, they follow the panicky way of prestige; in the long run they follow the ways of power.

This scathing portrait by Professor Mills is a portrait of a social class, not an insult directed against middle-class individuals; just as we have been analyzing the social potentialities of a class, and not "idealizing" workers.

But surely, with this portrait before one, and realizing the truth that it contains, it is easy to see why middle-class groups simply cannot work up the dynamic drive which is necessary before one can be "courageous and bold and militant."

Struggle "For Something Better"

Let us take a simple model: a factory worker on a picket line can, and often does, abuse entering scabs and may have to be restrained from physical attack; he is not constrained by notions of bourgeois respectability from acting this way, even though he may be quite "respectable" and "bourgeois" in his behavior on all other normal occasions. He is more alienated from class society, no matter how he thinks—or how he thinks he thinks. But go along the scale of workers up (or down) toward more and more "respectable white-collar workers and employees, to office employees, to bank tellers, to fashion-house fitters, to . . . college professors. And try to imagine them yelling at scabs on a picket line.

Not because we think yelling at scabs is itself the height of courage or boldness or militancy, but because it is a handy and visualizable token of what is at stake: the dynamism of the class in its organized struggle for "something better" and against what-is. We should rather examine the record of the working class in far more crucial situations than mere strikes; we should rather see how some of the heights of valor and self-sacrifice have been reached by unknown workers, not named heroes, in revolutionary struggles; but these are not visualizable for the average American reader, who after all is himself the product of a society dominated by middle-class mediocrity.

(5) Finally, we are talking about the organized and militant anti-capitalist struggle of the only class which has the social power and weight to abolish the old order and build a new society.

Whatever a historian says about the role of force in revolutions, it is a Marxist principle that social revolutions are not made by bullets. This is the caricature of socialist revolution implanted in the mind of the ignorant man by certain types of policemen and certain types of professors. The Marxist-so-

cialist believes that when the working class, and its associated allies from other sections of the people, are in their massed majority ready for the abolition of capitalism, it is their social power which will determine the result in the last analysis.

The social power of the class depends not only on its numbers. It depends also on its homogeneity and organizability, as we have discussed, its striking power. It also depends on the indispensability of the services which it performs in keeping the world's work going.

No class has its hands so closely on the basic work without which the system grinds to a halt. Not a wheel can turn without them. No other class can precipitate a social crisis by the deliberate decision of its organized cadres as in a large-scale strike. When the working class goes into battle, all of society is embroiled, for all depends on it. Every time the working class stirs, the rest of society shakes. Yet there is debate over its "special role."

After all of the above, there is still a deeper "why" to be asked, a question that goes behind all of the points we have made up to now. Within the confines of the plan for this pamphlet-issue, we have an opportunity only to point to it.

NO SOCIAL PROGRAM

In the last analysis, the "rearguard" character of the middle classes, which Professor Mills points to, reflects their political and social blind-alley. They cannot give society a lead because there is no social program which in any way corresponds to the special interests of the middle class. From the conditions of their existence arises no pointer to a way out for all of society.

In contrast, the working class, as the bottom layer of all classes, cannot even stir without pointing to a program, even when it itself rejects it: the abolition of capitalism, its class antagonist, and the assumption of social responsibility by the democratically organized people regardless of private profit.

At bottom, it is because the interests of the working class, inherently contained in its struggles, point a program for a basic transformation and reconstruction of society that this class is pushed to take a vanguard role in every struggle for freedom and emancipation.

We need hardly spend much space affirming how cognizant we are of how often the working class and its interests have been deceived and betrayed by its enemies and false friends. The history of capitalism, from one point of view, is nothing but a history of continued duping of the working class. In fact, deception of the working class is one of the most important conditions for the maintenance of capitalism or any other exploitive system.

It is hardly necessary for us to learn all about this, then, from critics who like to argue that socialists' "faith" in the working class is misplaced. It is hardly necessary for us to be told, also, that today, in good part, the Stalinist menace feeds on its ability to dupe and deceive the working class in a number of capitalist countries like France and Italy. The battle for socialist democracy against both capitalism and Stalinism can even be summed up as the battle to free the working class from its deception by each of these class enemies.

CRUCIAL WORKING CLASS

But this is a battle which, by definition, is won as soon as the workers are "undeceived." It is meanwhile a downright irrelevancy in this connection for critics to tell us, as they do every so often, that because the working class has so long been deceived and betrayed, we must conclude that it is hopeless.

We point out only: It is the working class that it is crucial for the reaction to deceive, not the petty-bourgeoisie or any of its fellow rearguarders. And this is because only the working class can lead the movement to overthrow it, whether it be capitalist or Stalinist reaction.

The socialist revolution, once observed Rosa Luxemburg, is a war in which there are necessarily an unending series of "defeats" followed by only one victory. We guarantee nothing, of course, except the honor and dignity of fighting for a new and better world, rather than the vileness of adapting one's mind and heart to a vile one. We guarantee to no one that the working class is predestined to "behave according to our blueprints" even if we sit by in interested passivity to see whether it does so. We offer only a road of struggle and a choice of allies in the only war worth fighting, the battle for a socialist democracy against the rival world blocs of war and exploitation.