

# LIBERATOR



Peter Alma

# ANGUST 1924-20¢



ONE MILLION

# German Workers Chained to the Rock



600,000 Miners Locked Out  
400,000 Workers on Strike  
7,000 In German Prisons

## Wives and Children Starving

The German workers are fighting for the preservation of their rights and the eight hour day.

Their fight is our fight.  
If they lose, we lose. If they win, we win.  
Capitalists are quick to learn from each other.  
Today it is Germany. Tomorrow it may be America.

### HELP

HAMMER AWAY THE CHAINS

5c A BLOW 5c

#### OUR AIM

To give aid to all needy workers and class war victims without conditions, without political discrimination, whenever and wherever the existence of a working class is menaced by an economic or natural catastrophe, or by political oppression.

INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' AID,  
19 South Lincoln St., Chicago, Ill.

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Enclosed find \$.....as my contribution.

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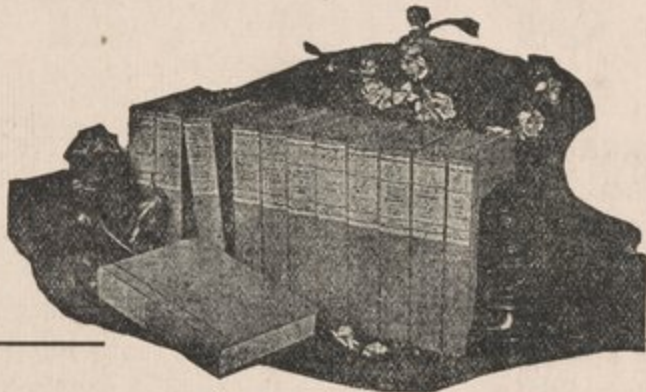
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COMMITTEE FOR INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' AID



# A FEW FACTS ABOUT Oscar Wilde



HE was a London dandy who startled society dinner-tables with his wit and conversation.

He was an Irish aristocrat from an ancient titled family, who dressed in velvet clothes that made people gasp. He was a daring dilettant, and an intimate friend of Sarah Bernhardt and of all the intellectuals. But this dazzling man was hurled suddenly from the heights of brilliance and popularity into the depths of despair and suffering. The delicate white hands were bleeding from tearing oakum in a criminal's prison. And what did he write?

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And besides these Oscar Wilde created that amazing novel "The Picture of Dorian Gray, a story of London High-Life and Low-Life; The Decay of Lying; The Truth of Masks; Lord Arthur Savile's Crime; A Woman of No Importance; Salome; Russian Novelists; and countless plays, poems, essays and stories. All these are included in this offer.

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**T**HIS MONTH MARKS THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE GREAT WAR that reddened the whole world in blood and agony. It began in the dark days of July and August, 1914, and the whole capitalist world is still in chaos after six years of peace.

This month, and for months to come, there will be growing protests against new wars. The Communists will protest. But the Communist interpretation of the problems confronting the nation will differ from the wailing pacifist protest, as vigorously as Communists differ from these faint-hearted utopians on all vital social problems. The Communist position on the impending war requires your thorough study.

**A**MERICA IS ENTERING A PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN that will develop as the most interesting in the history of the nation. You cannot permit yourself to be duped by the lies that will be spread to confuse the gullible voters. Remember this, that everything you read in the subsidized press is capitalist propaganda—lies, deliberate distortions and misrepresentations.

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**N**O ONE HAS THE TIME to read all the literature put out on these subjects. But a few magazines carefully selected, because of the principles they uphold, and because of their integrity of character, will keep you well posted, will make you an intelligent observer, or a useful participant, in developing world events.

**S**UMMER MONTHS ARE HERE. The beaches and parks invite you for recreation. Make this recreation profitable, mentally as well as physically.

**A**UGUST IS THE MONTH to look over the lists of magazines and choose your reading for the entire year.

**O**N THE OPPOSITE PAGE WE OFFER YOU an interesting group of magazines to choose from in the August Subscription Club Offers.



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"The Communist International" is the official publication of the Executive Committee of the Communist International. It carries articles on Communist activities the world over.

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The LABOR HERALD is a real leader. It is not a magazine for the mentally lazy. But it joins with a typographical excellence, an incisive official direction, both in theory and practice of the revolutionary labor union movement of America.

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Morgan

*Fred Ellis*

"For Thine Is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory"



# THE LIBERATOR

Vol. VII, No. 8 [Serial No. 76]

August, 1924

## The Convention of the Conference for Progressive Political Action

By William Z. Foster

RECENTLY, Zinoviev said that American workers are so backward politically that the problems they are wrestling with are those that the proletariat in European countries dealt with in 1848. He said that from a proletarian standpoint the United States is to be compared politically with Persia or China, rather than with England or Germany. Never was this criticism more amply justified than by the July 4 convention of the Conference for Progressive Political Action. Based as it was upon the railroad unions, it might have been expected that the C. P. P. A. would have made real progress towards the development of a labor party. But it did nothing more than to give a pitiful exhibition of the political unripeness of the American working class. From the modern class conscious proletarian point of view, the whole affair was a tragic farce.

Surrounded on all sides by the most powerful enemies, who wield a greater power than any other section of the world's capitalist class, the masses of industrial workers and exploited farmers have a most urgent need for a definite class program, concrete organization, and militant leadership. But the C. P. P. A. was utterly blind to these burning wants. It failed completely to produce substantial constructive action. It was a hopeless fizzle.

### The Question of Program.

Of the many needs suffered by the industrial workers and exploited farmers, none is more burning than a real understanding of the social forces at work about them. A clear analysis of capitalism and the definite development of a class viewpoint is the first essential for effective political action by the workers in the factories and on the farms. In this fundamental matter, the C. P. P. A. convention failed 100 per cent. The drivel it turned out as an analysis of the situation and a program of action is enough to make working class leaders in other countries smile to think that such rot could possibly emanate from an overwhelmingly trade union convention in the greatest capitalist country in the world.

At no time in the proceedings did a single speech or document make any effort whatsoever really to analyze the situation, by pointing out the economic forces leading to the concentration of capital and the sharpening of class antagonisms. Without question or discussion, the pettiest of petty bourgeois conceptions was adopted. From the general confusion of thought, this conception stood forth about as follows: A group of wicked and unscrupulous persons, through the use of unfair methods, have won a privileged position in industry and the government, through which they rob the "people," and it behooves everybody, the honest elements of the citizenry, to rise and drive the rascals out, thus establishing an era of fair dealing. It has been said that the convention of the Conference for Progressive Political Action sought a basis of class collaboration. That is true, but its action in this respect was unconscious. It was too stupid even to recognize the concept of social classes, much less to develop the idea of collaboration between them. The whole thing was a petty bourgeois mess, in which the workers did not distinguish themselves from the well-to-do farmers, small merchants, petty manufacturers, and independent bankers. Nor did they understand their relation to the poor farmers and the alliance that they should set up with them. As stated by the Chairman, Johnston, who at one time called himself a Socialist, all these social groups were in the same boat, suffered the same oppression, and had to have the same remedy.

The convention dubbed itself "progressive," this favorite term being slopped all over the whole proceedings. But the fact is that it was economically the least progressive of the four big political conventions held this year. Whatever else may be said against them, the Republican and Democratic party conventions were progressive in the sense that they stand definitely for the interests of the capitalist class, a class which is driving ahead on a course which leads straight to the revolution. Likewise the St. Paul convention was progressive in the sense that the industrial



workers and exploited farmers who made it up understood the principles of capitalist development and sought to free themselves from the evils surrounding them by putting an end to the system that caused these evils. But the C. P. P. A. Convention had no forward look. Its goal was a return to the dead and gone era of free competition, and all its trust-busting program was directed to that end. It sought its inspiration in the petty bourgeois ideals of 1776 and in such moth-eaten documents as the Declaration of Independence. Its motto, real enough even though not clearly stated, was "Backward, turn backward, O, Time, in thy flight." It had no vision or purpose more definite than that expressed in the endless flood of platitudes about re-establishing "the rule of the people," setting up "an honest government in the interest of all classes," "a return to the ideals of true American democracy," and other similar petty bourgeois slush, *ad nauseam*. The C. P. P. A. Convention did not understand the class character of society, nor did it make any progress towards the development of a proletarian class program. Its point of view was petty bourgeois through and through, and its whole program is of the same character. It in no way corresponds to the interests of the workers and exploited farmers.

#### The Question of Organization.

Next to a thorough understanding of their problem and a definite plan of action, the most burning need of the industrial workers and exploited farmers, is a separate political organization of their own. But the C. P. P. A. Convention failed to realize and satisfy even this elemental demand. All that it could muster the initiative to do was to make a weak promise that after the election the question of forming a party would be taken up. It did not dare even to declare in favor of a party, for fear that the autocrat, LaFollette, might be offended. For a time it looked as though the Socialists might possibly make a fight on this issue. But they did not. Hillquit weakly gave in and timidly accepted the orders from LaFollette that no party should be formed.

The failure of the convention to form a party, a course which was supported by the Socialists, was a direct betrayal of the farmer-labor party movement. In many states there are at present struggling Farmer-Labor parties. These will have to confront the hostile LaFollette state movements, which, setting up their own tickets, will demand that they be supported and that those of the Farmer-Labor parties be abandoned. The action of the C. P. P. A. in postponing the question of forming a party, will be used as a convenient club by the LaFollette forces everywhere to beat down the weak Farmer-Labor parties and to turn all support to the LaFollette petty bourgeois candidates. Humanity has much faith; hope springs eternal. But those who are gullible enough to believe, as Debs apparently does, that LaFollette will agree to the formation of a real party of industrial workers and exploited farmers in January, are possessed of a faith capable of moving not only mountains but whole continents. If the C. P. P. A. movement is ever to contribute anything substantial to the formation of a farmer-labor party, it can only do so by the proletarian masses breaking away from the political direction of



Kate Kollwitz

"Bread!"

LaFollette and of the trade union bureaucrats of the Johnston stripe, who now control it.

#### The Question of Leadership.

When the workers venture into a political combination containing or making alliance with farmers and other petty bourgeois, they must, upon pain of certain disaster, retain control of the movement. But in this vital matter of maintaining proletarian leadership, as in so many others, the C. P. P. A. convention failed signally. Johnston and the other trade union and Socialist leaders surrendered the initiative completely to the petty bourgeois champion, LaFollette. Humbly and meekly they did everything he instructed them to. When he sneezed, they all blew their noses. LaFollette would not permit the convention to nominate him; he nominated himself. Nor would he let it consider a program; he made up his own program and sent his son to the convention to read it, not deigning to come himself. He ordered that no party should be formed, and he refused to allow the convention even to suggest the name of someone to run as candidate for vice-president. All of which the convention timidly agreed to, without in any way securing control or discipline over him. During the convention there was much talk in favor of democracy and against dictatorship. But no political boss within a generation has dared as undemocratically and dictatorially to treat a convention as LaFollette treated this convention of the Conference for Progressive Political Action.

But LaFollette knew very well whom he was dealing with. He was sure he could get away with his rough stuff. He has seen the C. P. P. A. trade union leaders in action often enough. He knew that they are visionless and spineless. He has seen their unions cut all to pieces, and seen



that they have not had sufficient intelligence to profit by their defeat by amalgamating the remaining union fragments and making a fresh start. He knew that their policy of stupidity and betrayal had destroyed their leadership among the masses and that they were hungrily waiting to get on his political band-wagon. He knew that even while they were applauding him in Cleveland, they were also treacherously working for the nomination of McAdoo in New York. He knew they were yellow, so he told them what to do, and they swallowed his whole program without even a grimace. Such an outrageous proceeding could happen in no other modern industrial country but this. It shows the low estate to which the American labor movement has fallen. Gompers keeps one section of it a tail to the Democratic party kite, while Johnston has the rest of it tied to LaFollette's apron strings.

#### The Task of the Workers' Party.

Although the C. P. P. A. Convention failed completely to map out a working class program, to lay the basis for a Farmer-Labor party, and to establish proletarian leadership in the present political turmoil, it did succeed in giving a great impetus to the petty bourgeois united front. This now stretches from Hearst to Debs. Hearst, on the right, says that LaFollette is a trifle too radical, but that he will support him, and Debs, on the left, says, "We need not blush or apologize to give our support to Robert M. LaFollette," and he calls upon the shades of Marx and Engels to justify his unqualified endorsement of a man who has bitterly fought socialism all through his long public life. Such a broad front, from the reactionary Hearst to the erstwhile revolutionary leader, Debs, indicates a big sweep of the masses and the casting of several million votes for LaFollette in the coming election.

In this situation, with the trade union and exploited farmer masses losing themselves in the LaFollette petty bourgeois movement, the task of the Workers Party is clear. It must do what the C. P. P. A. has failed to do. It must point out to the workers more sharply than ever the class character of society. It must puncture the sophistries of LaFollettism, and demonstrate that the capitalist system is impossible of reform, and must be abolished and superseded by the dictatorship of the proletariat. It must carry on a relentless struggle for the formation of a great mass Farmer-Labor party. It must raise the standard of proletarian revolution against the petty bourgeois platitudes and stupidities of LaFollette.

In order to fulfill this task, the Workers Party must make the election fight under its own banner. With the masses, ignorant of their true interests, rallying to the demagogue, LaFollette, the National Farmer-Labor Party, formed at the St. Paul convention, could not assemble any considerable portion of the masses under its influence. The betrayal at Cleveland made impossible a farmer-labor united front in this campaign. The Workers Party had to recognize this fact. It had to step out into the open, in order to make a clear-cut revolutionary fight against LaFollettism. For the Workers Party to have continued behind the candidates of the skeleton National Farmer-Labor Party would have been to accept all the disadvantages of the

united front with none of its advantages. The Workers Party would have had to do most of the fighting, with little opportunity to get the benefit of it, either through presenting its program clearly to the people, or through building up its own party membership.

The present campaign in support of a straight Communist ticket for president and vice-president offers the Workers Party many advantages. It gives our party an opportunity for the first time to function nationally in an election, to make the working masses acquainted with its program, and to ask their definite support of Communist principles. In the fight the party will be able to demonstrate itself clearly as the sole representative of the revolutionary program in the American labor movement. It will give the party an opportunity to carry on the membership drive under the most favorable circumstances and otherwise to add substantially to the party's strength. It is to be hoped that the membership, from top to bottom of the organization, will keenly realize these advantages and will mobilize all its resources for the big struggle ahead. A militant campaign by the Workers Party for revolutionary ends is the only effective reply to the C. P. P. A.-Socialist Party surrender to the LaFollette petty bourgeois movement.

## The Fatherland Is in Danger

*(Tenth Anniversary of the World War)*

**T**HE patriot-mob howls and protests!  
The fifes shriek aloud a new hate.  
The Nationalist rabble seeks a new war.  
The Fatherland is in danger!

What's that to us?

The corpses of your war still stink.  
The cripples of your war still beg.  
The hunger of your war still strangles us.  
The Fatherland is in danger?

What's that to us?

Shall we go again to die for you?  
Shall we fire again on our class-brothers?  
And swell the profits in your coffers?  
The Fatherland is in danger?

What's that to us?

We bleed in one war only: Class war.  
We arm for one war only: Civil war.  
We have one shot left: it is for you!  
The Fatherland is in danger?

That's rubbish to us!

Oskar Kanehl.



# Coming-The Bread Line

By Jay Lovestone

**D**ISCONCERTING quietness spreads over the wide ramifications of American industry.

Recent months have seen a continuous recession in production and exchange. Except for a spasmodic flicker of hope here and there, the signs of the times do not point to a revival in industry at an early date.

Regardless of some deliberate efforts to create confusion about the prevailing state of affairs, the economic situation today does not actually present itself as an ingenious jig-saw puzzle.

What we are confronting is much more than an ordinary slowing down of business. The economic development in the last five months indicates a definite slump resembling in many respects the great depression experienced by the country in 1920-21.

Bringing up to date our observations of the trend in industry made by us in the last issue of *The Liberator*, we find the following outstanding facts, "barometrics" as it were, of the economic condition at hand:

## A Broad Downward Sweep.

Dun's list of wholesale quotations reveals more reductions than increases for the nineteenth consecutive week.

The June unfilled orders of the United States Steel Corporation show a further decline of 365,584 tons. The total of 3,262,505 tons is a little more than half of the unfilled orders of June 30, last year. This record is lower than that of any month in more than thirteen years, or since May 31, 1911.

Steel ingot production was 22 per cent less in June than in May, totalling only 2,056,466 tons. This is the lowest point reached since September, 1922.

And "The Iron Age" tells us that "There is no reason as yet to look for a larger output in July than that of June." For the first two weeks in July, the metal working industries in the Cleveland district were operating only at 35 per cent capacity.

Freight traffic on Class 1 Railroads for May showed a falling off of 14.4 per cent in net ton miles compared with the corresponding month of last year.

For the first five months of this year, freight traffic on these railroads was about 8 per cent lower than for the similar period of 1923.

In the one week ending June 28, there was a decline of 113,116 cars compared with the car loadings for the same week of last year.

In June the output of automobiles was smaller than in the corresponding month of a year ago. In June 265,000 cars and trucks were turned out as against 312,813 in May and 378,105 in June, 1923.

The buying and shipment of lumber for the first six months of the year show a falling off of seven per cent in comparison with the same period in 1923. The National Lumber Association reports a heavy decline in the lumber movement, with production and unfilled orders decreasing.

In the boot and shoe industry there is a steady restriction of output for the first five months of the year. Up to June 1, the pairs of shoes manufactured were twenty-four million less than in the first five months of last year.

The June F. W. Dodge returns for building contracts awarded in the thirty-six northeastern states reveal a decline of eight per cent from May. The *Annalist* significantly remarks apropos of this tendency: "Building, the present chief sustaining element in business, though still above normal volume, is gradually declining."

The slackening of business is further shown in the June report of drawn checks on American banks at the principal clearing houses of the country. The figures for the month show a decline of nearly four per cent from May. Excepting February, this is the lowest for the year to date.

Dun's statistics for June indicate 1,607 commercial failures compared with 1358 for the same month of 1923. So far every month of this year has exceeded in number the failures for the corresponding month of last year.

## Increasing Wage Cuts—Decreasing Employment.

The pronounced increase in wage cuts throughout our industries predicted by European observers is here.

At Birmingham, Alabama, three thousand employes of the Woodward Iron Company were notified of a ten per cent reduction in wages, effective at once.

The American Flint Glass Workers' Union is reported to have voted to accept a reduction in wages for its members.

From the authoritative *Bache's Review*, we learn that: "Unemployment is increasing and wage cuts are becoming more frequent."

The effect of the wage reductions to date has been to reduce the purchasing power of the workers by about a quarter of a billion dollars per month in comparison with their March buying capacity. The trend is headed downward.

In Illinois we are told by the General Advisory Board of the Department of Labor that for June "the number out of work was far beyond the 80,000 who have been laid off" and that "there is reason for believing that there will be further declines in production before there is a sustained upward movement."

In New York State there was a drop of nine per cent between March and June in the number employed.

The H. C. Frick Coke Company has closed some of its properties. The Sanford Mill at Sanford, Maine, manufacturing automobile and general upholstery, after having worked overtime for two years, is now operating three days a week. The Lackawanna plant of the Bethlehem Steel Company has shut down, affecting four thousand workers. The Amoskeag Manufacturing Company, one of the largest textile producers in the world, has closed down its entire Coolidge Mill and its Mill Number Eleven.

Predicating our conclusion upon the situation in the



basic industries of the country we can safely say that the outlook is for a continuation of the downward tendency.

#### An Insoluble Contradiction.

The present economic crisis reveals a fundamental and inherent contradiction in the whole system of production and exchange. Our 115,000,000 people need clothing, shelter, food. Almost all of these men and women are willing and able to work. The country has the best-developed industrial machine in the world. America has more than half the world's gold, veritably mountains of gold. The United States with only 6 per cent of the world's population produces more than 43 per cent of the world's output of coal; 54 per cent of iron; 64 per cent of the steel; 49 per cent of the copper; more than 72.5 per cent of the petroleum; 69 per cent of cotton; 52 per cent of timber; 41 per cent of shoes; 92 per cent of automobiles; 43 per cent of printing paper. The United States has within its boundaries almost half of the world's railroad mileage; almost three-fourths of the world's telephone and telegraph equipment.

Furthermore, American workers and farmers are the most efficient in the world. A comparison of the efficiency of American production in 1781 and 1923 shows amazing progress for our workers. The production per day per man rose, from 1781 to 1923 as follows: In iron from 500 to 5,000 pounds; lumber from 100 to 750 feet; nails from 5 to 500 pounds; shoes from one-fourth of a pair to ten pair; coal from one-half ton to four tons; paper from twenty to 200,000 square feet.

Yet under such conditions of abundance bordering on superfluity, millions of American workers and farmers do not have enough of shoes, clothing, shelter, education and food. In periods of severe economic depression—even the barest necessities of life are denied them.

Why is it that the great mass of workers are face to face with a lack of the means of subsistence when they have produced so much—to all appearances too much—of the means of subsistence?

Periodically such economic crises arise in capitalist society. The bourgeois economists have developed what they call the theory of "business cycles"—a theory of recurring economic crises at somewhat regular, definite intervals. Some of them see these crises occurring every twenty years; some every ten years; others every seven years; and still others every forty-two months.

The theory of "business cycles" or recurring slumps and depressions, has been hailed as a great discovery by the standardized professors of political economy, by the recognized economists of the chair. An examination of the process whereby the product of the worker is turned into an instrument for his subjection, reveals the basic cause for the above painfully contradictory phenomenon. It further discloses the fact that this much heralded discovery of "business cycles" is merely a vulgarization of the scientific analysis of capitalism made by Marx and Engels.

#### The Recurring Crises.

It is obvious that the perfecting of machinery makes a good deal of human labor superfluous. The introduction and the increasing use of machinery means the displacement of millions of manual workers by a greatly reduced number



Plenty

George Grosz

of machine workers. The improvement of machinery means more and more a displacement of the machine workers themselves.

The army of unemployed, the industrial reserve army grows.

Hence it comes about that "the most powerful instrument for shortening labor time, becomes the most unflinching means for placing every moment of the laborer's time and that of his family at the disposal of the capitalist for the purpose of expanding the value of his capital." (Capital, vol. 1, Chapter XV)

Overproduction brings under-consumption. Over-work for some brings unemployment for many others. The drive for new consumers abroad, for new world markets brings consumption at home down to a very low point and tends to destroy the home market.

The social effects of such economic derangements are admirably summed up by Marx as follows: "The law that always equilibrates the relative surplus population or industrial reserve army, to the extent and energy of accumulation, this law rivets the laborer to capital more firmly than the wedges of Vulcan did Prometheus to the rock. It establishes an accumulation of misery corresponding with accumulation of capital. Accumulation of wealth at one pole



is, therefore, at the same time, accumulation of misery, agony of toil, slavery, ignorance, brutality, mental degradation at the opposite pole, on the side of the class that produces its own product in the form of capital." (Capital, Vol. 1, Chapter 24)

The extension of our markets cannot keep pace with the extension of our productive system precipitated by the gigantic war demands. Colonel Leonard P. Ayres, vice-president of the Cleveland Trust Company thus characterizes this condition: "We have enormous and unbalanced industrial equipment, over-developed mine resources, foreign trade hampered by tariff restrictions and serious inequalities between the prices of industrial goods and those of agricultural products." The present collapse in industry, arises out of such inevitable collisions. Engels would view our present situation in these words: "Capitalist production has begotten another 'vicious circle!' . . . In these crises, the contradiction between socialized production and capitalist appropriation ends in a violent explosion. The circulation of commodities is, for the time being, stopped. Money, the means of circulation, becomes a hindrance to circulation. All the laws of production and circulation of commodities are turned upside down. The economic collision has reached its apogee. The mode of production is in rebellion against the mode of exchange." (Socialism, Utopian and Scientific, pp. 41-2, Frederick Engels).

#### What Is The Way Out?

And how can we end the present condition under which the highest industrial organization and the most efficient workers beget underconsumption, misery and starvation for the great masses? Engels has well answered this question: "This solution can only consist in the practical recognition of the social nature of the modern forces of production, appropriation, and exchange with the socialized character of the means of production. And this can only come about by society openly and directly taking possession of the productive forces which have outgrown all control except that of society as a whole. The social character of the means of production and of the products today reacts against the producers, periodically disrupts all production and exchange, acts only like a law of nature working blindly, forcibly, destructively. But with the taking over by society of the productive forces, the social character of the means of production and of the products will be utilized by the producers with a perfect understanding of its nature, and instead of being a source of disturbance and periodical collapse, will become the most powerful lever of production itself." (Idem, pp. 46-47)

#### Time To Act.

But until the proletariat takes matters into its own hands to wipe out completely the capitalist system of production and exchange certain immediate steps must be taken by the working class to stave off as much as possible the hardships attendant upon disorganization in our industrial order.

Our trade union movement especially should be on guard to avoid the casualties it suffered in 1921. Wage

reductions must be resisted stoutly. A campaign to extend organization and to strengthen the existing unions is now a vital necessity.

Unemployment must be met honestly and courageously. The immediate organization of unemployment councils throughout the country is very much in order. These councils should consist of the employed as well as the unemployed in the various industries. Unemployment is a problem and a matter of concern for those who are at work as well as those who are out of work. The government should be compelled to enact an unemployment insurance law providing for compensation, full trade union wages, to those thrown out of work. The government should also be compelled to supply work at regular trade union wages to the unemployed.

Finally, now is the time for all working men and exploited to extend and intensify their political organizations. The building of a powerful political party of the workers and poor farmers will go a long way toward securing immediate relief from the suffering brought on by the recurring economic crises of capitalism. More than that. Such organization is a giant step towards preparing the working class for the overthrow of the capitalist system of production and exchange and supplanting it with a communist order.



George Grosz

"I quit!"



# The Economic Anatomy of Five Conventions

By Max Bedacht

ECONOMIC interests of groups and classes in society form the solid basis upon which their political movements and endeavors are built. Thus the political struggles in society are struggles between groups and classes whose economic interests are dissimilar or are antagonistic to each other. Political struggles are the decisive manifestations of the class struggle.

Most of the apologists of the existing order deny that. They paint political struggles as the battles of lofty ideals, not on the concrete base of economic realities, but fencing on the ground of such nebulous abstractions as patriotism and democracy. Once in a great while their desire to score a seemingly good point elopes with the prudence of these esteemed contemporaries and induces them to pay a compliment to the economic factors in political phenomena. Thus we find them today investigating the possibilities of a political union of the workers and the farmers. Their conclusion is that incompatible economic interests of these two groups stand in the way of political unity. Thus they acknowledge the class-struggle character of political battles. But they are so obsessed by the idea that the divine mission of workers and farmers alike is to fetch hot chestnuts out of the political fires of the capitalists that they cannot see that these two groups or classes have developed at least one common interest during their adventure of a united political front with capitalism—namely, that both got their fingers burnt.

Even a dumb animal reacts to getting its paws burnt. So did the urban and rural proletarian and semi-proletarian voters. But the existence of two political cook stoves to simmer capitalist interests complicated the process of enlightenment for these voters. Burnt at one fire, they turned to the other. And by the time the pain of their new experience forced them to withdraw their fingers, the pain of the old one was forgotten. So they turned back and forth—and the operators of the witches' cauldron of capitalist politics had sufficient confidence in their ability as conjurers to believe that they could continue that show forever as a well-paying comedy of errors. The show paid so well, indeed, that it became one of the institutions of Americanism. To believe in it became a condition sine qua non of patriotism. The lame-duck keynoter of the so-called Republican convention in Cleveland even elevated this two-party system to an integral part of democracy itself. He developed a whole theory stamping anyone not believing as he does, an enemy of democracy.

But, alas, theories are only theories. And if they are conceived and born only of pious wishes they are bound to give way to the hard facts of life.

As a prelude to the great political battle on November 4, there took place in the last few weeks a number of conventions, starting with the Republican convention at Cleveland. In all these conventions were reflected the factors that make up the armies in political battles, and that determine the final victory. An analysis of these factors will

show that our "beloved" order has entered upon a new epoch. The forces of cohesion which hitherto cemented capitalism into a compact unit, lose their power and make imminent its decomposition.

The very force that welded this order together, that made it victorious over its predecessors, is now driving it asunder.

Although a philosophic formula may not explain a phenomenon it can at least describe it: the very life of the order is the cause of its impending death.

For the political manifestations of the life of our order, an agreeable fiction has been created. The head of the house of Morgan, and his office boy, are put on a footing of equality by transforming both of them into citizens. A citizen is an artificial homunculus created in the same retort that gave birth to the fiction of democracy. A citizen is some kind of eunuch, stripped of all the things that make him potent in ordinary life—economic power, social position, etc., and reduced to a point of absolute equality with all the rest of his luckless brother and sister citizens.

A moment of reflection will prove the artificiality of this animal. Morgan will not step out of his own skin into the toga of citizenship as an abstract being, but he will take with him all the powers he possesses together with all the desires and aims such power inspires or necessitates. And the only advantage that his office boy can ever hope to gain over him in the exercise of his right as a citizen does not lie in any fictitious equality, but in the fact that there are more office boys than Morgans. However, the advantage which numbers give the office boys over the Morgans can only be obtained after the former are completely cured of all illusions of equality; after they give up competing with the Morgans on a footing of equality and lead their forces into political battles not as citizens but as office boys.

Experience is the only effective teacher of this truth. Experience carries with it a punishment for disobedience that grows more painful as the necessity for learning increases.

Alignments and re-alignments of the masses around political parties take place on the basis of issues which arise out of the economic relations of groups and classes in society; and these relations are regulated by the state of economic development of the country. In the age of competition these relations differed from those in the age of monopoly and trusts. In the first stages of development of the capitalist order the social groupings are in a state of flux. The proletariat are not yet a fully developed class. The petty bourgeoisie or middle classes regard themselves in a state of transition from poverty to riches, from insignificance to power. The most powerful and richest group looks for the increase of its power and riches on roads and in fields where the middle classes look for their chance of ascendancy. There exists between the latter groups comparative unity of interest and purpose. True, there develop differences between manorial lords and the shipping in-





Maurice Becker

**Both Are Fine Masks**

terests, between beneficiaries of free labor of those of chattel slavery, between commercial and industrial groups. These differences created the issues on which political divisions of the past took place. Although such issues developed even to the point of civil war, yet they were manifestations of the vigorous life of the order, and not signs of disease. These struggles helped build firmer foundations for the further development of the capitalist order. Every next step in this development had a greater appeal to rally all the forces of the order. That was capitalism on the upward path of development.

The capitalist order has reached the turning point and is now started on its downward path. The proletariat is now a fully developed class. Its unity of interest need only be recognized by the workers themselves to become the last stepping-stone to power by that class.

The petty bourgeoisie, or middle classes, slowly begin to realize that their transition is not one leading them upward, but rather downward.

Every move of the most powerful and richest group and class, widens the distance between them and the middle classes. Every issue arising out of the aims and policies of these most powerful groups creates new points of dissension. The comparative unity of purpose and interests between the most powerful groups and middle classes has disappeared and the disappearance has made room for decided antagonisms. While there still exists a common desire for profit the conditions and chances of obtaining it have changed radically.

In the first period of development, the masses of proletarians and semi-proletarians are so far removed from a consciousness of their economic and social position, that they fall an easy prey to the political charlatanism of capitalist democracy. Their mere belief in the abstractions of an equal citizenship makes them helpless victims of political mountebanks. Experience has not yet taught them their lesson.

On the other hand, the middle class (the petty bourgeoisie) finds its interests served in this first period in fol-

lowing the political leadership of the big brother. Development must change that state of affairs.

Since then, experience has been busily engaged in teaching the workers, and development has actively changed conditions for the petty bourgeoisie. Thus, at this moment we are in a stage of transition. The workers begin to shake off the paralytic influence of the myth of equality of citizenship and start to develop a new concept which will enable them to take advantage of the superiority of numbers of the office boys over the Morgans. This development has not yet taken the positive form of real, conscious political mass action by the workers; but manifests itself negatively in the form of a mass revolt against the old parties.

Hand in hand with the mass revolt goes a disintegration of the capitalist class itself. The petty bourgeoisie, no longer satisfied with the political leadership of big capital, sets up its own political aims. It dreams of the "good old days" of competition. It dreams of the time when its eyes were directed hopefully above—into spheres which they hoped to attain—while now they must look dreadfully below—into depths into which they are in danger of falling.

These middle classes are unfit for political leadership. The past is the ideal which they set up for the future. In every pinch they appeal to the workers against big capital and in every crisis they betray the workers to big capital. With Jeffersonian phrases they try to convince the world that it has lived in vain for a whole century and that the Alpha and Omega of statesmanship is a trip back to 1776, there to stay. They condemn big profits—for big capital, but they covet big profits for themselves. Their liberalism is at par with their humanitarianism which sheds tears about the misery of the masses but declares that misery to be within the law. They act like the French judge who tried a poor old woman, who had unlawfully collected dry branches in the woods. Listening to her tale of misery and poverty, he was moved to tears. He sentenced her to six months' imprisonment, declaring with a tearful voice: "Madam, it is not I that sentence you, but the law."

Aside from a general desire for the "good old days" this petty bourgeoisie has no positive political program. A collection of vague negatives is the best it can produce, and there are reasons for that. First, the class is not a coherent, economic group. Its composition ranges all the way from members of the honorable Barnacle Family to "independent" large manufacturers of finished products. No positive political program could satisfy them all. Secondly, this group can only hope to ride into power if it succeeds in hitching up the working masses to its political chariot. Any positive political program this class may advance must of necessity be anti-labor, because it can find no source for its coveted profits other than that of the hated big capitalists—exploitation of labor. The acme of its political strategy is fishing in the troubled waters of the present situation. Exploiting the political unrest of the masses is its desire; preventing the crystallization of that political unrest into class organization is its aim.

With this background clearly in mind, we can understand the happenings of the political conventions of the last few weeks.

In the Republican party and its official machine, big capital has its most perfect tool. The disintegration of the cap-



italist class affected the party machinery least, because through decades it has developed into an outspoken representative of big capital. In the rank and file of this party—comprising also proletarian, semi-proletarian and petty bourgeois elements—that disintegration of capitalism had its effect. But the tendencies thus created among the masses found no expression in the convention. These tendencies will only register themselves on election day. The republican convention was nothing but a meeting of the political lackeys of Morgan and Company.

The Democratic party, at least as far as it operated in the north and northwest, was always more or less a party of the petty bourgeoisie, until the administration of Wilson, when it was hitched to the wagon of the House of Morgan. The changes in concept and desires of the petty bourgeoisie expressed themselves in their conduct at the democratic convention. The real feeling of large parts of the rank and file of that party found more expression in that convention than similar groups of the Republican party found in theirs. But finally, the petty bourgeoisie found itself defeated in all its hopes, and the party, with flying colors, definitely turned into the camp of the House of Morgan and Company. Morgan, the simple citizen, with his one vote on November 4, carried the nominations of both the old party conventions. And now, after having put up his bank cashier and his solicitor as candidates of both parties he can afford to stay home on election day. His political game turns out to be a skin game. He matches his political equality with that of his contemporary office boys, with the cynical announcement: Heads I win, tails you lose!

As a sign of changed days, the ghost of the Ku Klux Klan stalked through both old party conventions. That organization is the most perfect creation of petty bourgeois reactionary progressivism. Dissatisfied with capitalism as it is, it reverts to the socialism of idiots: Anti-semitism. Conceived for the petty bourgeoisie as an instrument of bootstrap lifting out of the modern capitalist jungles, it turns into systematic organization of insane prejudices which support that very jungle. But that is the destiny of all movements of a class that has no positive political program: a class that stands with one foot in the distant past and the other in its not so distant grave.

The political aspirations of that class are personified in Robert M. LaFollette, a superannuated Jacobin who was born a century too late. His cloak of republican virtues cannot cover the nakedness of his political program. As a belated St. George he starts out to kill the monster of big interests. But the time of dragon-hunting is past and in the light of the twentieth century he turns into a Don Quixote arresting by his antics the attention of the populace while the big interests go through the spectators' pockets. The comedy he plays turns into a tragedy because it arrests the exploited masses on their way to class political action.

In his endeavors this modern knight-errant was ably supported by the Cleveland convention of the Conference for Progressive Political Action. The love for capitalism in the hearts of the bureaucracy of organized labor found a concession to the pseudo-progressivism of LaFollette cheaper than the loss of large labor masses to the camp of independent political action through a class party.

The Socialist party countersigned this betrayal and wrote finis to the last chapter of the history of that organization. For the petty bourgeois organization into which it had turned, there was no other course possible. Having been an organization for the deception of the working class, it had to merge with a better and more effective one of that kind.

The relations of the development of political consciousness of the working urban and rural masses to the petty bourgeois third party tendencies, which gave promises of early clarification were again befuddled in Cleveland. The working masses, hardly freed from the drudgery of political marriage to big capital, were condemned to a worse drudgery in political wedlock with the politically impotent petty bourgeoisie.

Of all the political gatherings of the past weeks, the St. Paul meet on June 17 was the one that raised the banner of class action for the exploited. But the smoke screen of the Conference for Progressive Political Action has again confused the masses.

However, above the fog-bank of petty bourgeois charlatanism and pseudo-socialist treachery, the banner of independent working class political action is still flying and calling out to the exploited: "Only in your own power lies the assurance of your victory. Organize that power and you can challenge your enemies and their order. Unorganized you will fall an easy prey not only to the plans of your open enemies but also the sneaking designs of the hyenas of the battlefields—the petty bourgeoisie and social traitors."

The economic forces that have led millions of workers out of the camp of clear capitalist toward clear proletarian politics, are still at work. Although part of these masses have been temporarily arrested on their way by the siren song of meaningless progressivism, yet they will march on toward the banner of a class party. In the meantime, the communists faithfully remain the guardians of that banner and will rally those not caught by the tragical comedy of Cleveland around its standard bearers and candidates: William Z. Foster for president and Benjamin Gitlow for vice-president.

## Joan and Jesus

HAIL, the quiet cattle!  
Hail, the silly sheep!  
Before the "wise" men's prattle  
Long vigil did they keep.

They watched with silent yearning  
Earth's greatest, simple hicks:  
She kindled her own burning.  
He built his crucifix.

Sweet as loam, as shavings,  
Their words were turned to stones,  
Found echo in priests' ravings,  
In dying soldiers' groans.

Ralph Cheyney.



# The Communist Campaign for Class Action

By C. E. Ruthenberg

THE decision of the Workers Party to run Communist presidential candidates in this year's election has been hailed in some quarters as an abandonment of the policy of the United Front. This interpretation of the decision of the Workers Party is not correct. On the contrary, the decision of the Workers Party to place Communist candidates in the field is a continuation of its application of the United Front policy in the United States.

During the past two years, the Workers Party has made a consistent effort to create a mass party of workers and exploited farmers which would fight the class political struggles of these economic groups. That campaign was the application of the policy of the United Front in this country.

As there was not in the United States any mass political organization of workers and farmers with which the Workers Party could join in common struggles over immediate issues, thus forming a united front, it was the task of the Workers Party to create such an organization on the political field.

This goal the Party endeavored to achieve in the convention on July 3 last year and in the June 17 convention at St. Paul this year. The campaign this year gave every promise of being carried through successfully, when new factors were injected into the situation. Senator LaFollette made his attack on the Farmer-Labor party movement under the guise of an attack on Communist participation in the June 17 Convention. It is quite clear now, after the subsequent convention of the Conference for Progressive Political Action in Cleveland, that what Senator LaFollette was fighting at St. Paul was not Communist participation, but the idea of the formation of a Farmer-Labor party that would represent the exploited farm and labor class groups.

The second development was the unprecedented betrayal of the idea of the formation of a Farmer-Labor party at the convention of the Conference for Progressive Political Action at Cleveland. Those groups in that convention which had previously declared their intention to make a fight for a Farmer-Labor party swallowed the LaFollette program without protest. They accepted the reactionary economic program laid out by Senator LaFollette; they accepted his dictum that no new party should be formed.

The Socialist party, which for several decades had upheld the principle in the United States that the solution of the economic problem of capitalism lay, not in endeavoring to destroy the great organization for wealth production, but through the socialization of this organization, accepted at Cleveland the LaFollette program of "busting the trusts." The Socialist party by this action denied every basic principle which it had enunciated in the past and became an ally of Senator LaFollette, who is the representative, not of the working class nor of the exploited farmers, but of the small business men of the United States.

The question which the Workers Party faced, after this betrayal of even right-wing socialist principles by the Socialist party and its betrayal of the idea of class action by workers and exploited farmers, was whether the fight against the LaFollette alliance should be made through a Farmer-Labor

party or through a straight-out Communist challenge. The decision of the Workers Party is that the struggle against the LaFollette alliance and all that it carries with it including the leadership of the independent merchants, manufacturers, and bankers over the workers and farmers would best be met through the Workers Party raising the principles of revolution in this campaign.

A Farmer-Labor party campaign meant that the campaign must be conducted on a Farmer-Labor program. Such a program could not have been and would not have been as clear and definite a challenge to the reactionary economic program of the LaFollette-Socialist movement. The full significance of LaFollettism and of the betrayal of the Socialists could be brought before the workers of this country only through setting against the program of LaFollette and the Conference for Progressive Political Action, the program of the Communist movement in this country.

The Workers Party does not by this action abandon the United Front and the Farmer-Labor campaign. It will make this one of the central slogans of the campaign, the idea of the formation of the class Farmer-Labor party. Against the program of the "Conference for Progressive Political Action" and LaFollette, and against the acceptance by the workers and farmers of the leadership of and collaboration with the small business men of this country, the Workers Party will place the program for the organization of a mass party fighting a class struggle against capitalism.

The fact that large groups of the farmer-labor movement are still under the influence of LaFollette and LaFollettism, made it impossible for the Workers Party to make this revolutionary challenge in any other form than through the nomination of its own candidates. In this campaign the Workers Party will stand out as the only political party with a class program. The result of the campaign will not only be an advancement of communistic principle by rallying all the workers who are for revolutionary class action around the Communist party, but it will mean an advancement struggle for the United Front of workers and farmers on the political field through the fight the Workers Party will make against LaFolletteism.

## Before the Storm

THERE was a green dusk in the trees,  
Then an ominous breeze;  
The air turned white  
With sharp feverish light  
That made the grass yellow;  
The boughs of the willow,  
So black and keen,  
Slanting through the green,  
Hurt me with their loveliness  
Bent down in the sudden wind's quick stress.

Helen Hoyt.



# Let's Make the Issue Clear-Cut

By Duncan McDonald

I HAVE been asked by some of my friends why I withdrew my name as a candidate on the Farmer-Labor ticket for the position of president of the United States. Why, after having this high honor conferred on me, I did not stick and make the fight. I presume an explanation is in order, as some seem to think that I was either kicked off by the terrible Communists or that some deal was made by the LaFollette crowd to cause me to quit.

First, let me assure my friends that nothing of this sort took place. There was no political trading, no jockeying for position, no deal made. When I was asked to permit my name to be used at the St. Paul meeting I at first declined with thanks. It was not until the third day of the convention, and then only because it was considered advisable not to leave there until a ticket was nominated, that I consented to accept. Of course, I consider it a high honor to be asked by workers and farmers to head their ticket, and I fully appreciate their confidence. When I finally accepted I did so on certain conditions. Those conditions were to leave the matter of a change in candidates, platform, and such, in the hands of the executive committee of the Farmer-Labor party.

It was further agreed that the Farmer-Labor party executive committee would go to Cleveland and there would hold themselves in readiness to co-operate with other progressive groups if that opportunity offered. It was supposed there was to be a convention in Cleveland at which rank-and-filers would be permitted to exercise the usual rights accorded in conventions composed of supposed liberals. On its arrival there the Farmer-Labor executive committee discovered the Cleveland affair to be a one-man convention attended by alleged progressives who didn't even find it necessary to elect a chairman, as the chairman appointed himself and directed the whole affair.

Of course there was no hope of co-operating with one man, especially when that one man accused everybody of being tainted with Communism except himself and those in attendance. They were not there to form a new party, but to nominate one man, permitting him to name his running mate and make his own platform. This is surely a new brand of democracy, apparently patterned after the Republican brand made by the same process. The farmers were conspicuous by their absence, as were other groups. In this there was marked contrast with the St. Paul meeting.

In the St. Paul convention there were representatives ranging from a pale yellow hue to a deep red. They elected

their chairman, elected their platform committees and permitted a full and free discussion. At Cleveland, it was different. The St. Paul meeting was denounced as a gathering of reds and perhaps some did have some red in their make-up. Even the candidate selected at a conference of one or two in meeting prior to the Cleveland conference had once been denounced as a red for going to St. Paul. He had been tried for his seat in the senate and hung in effigy for his alleged redness. For some time it has been a popular pastime to indulge in red hysteria; it takes our mind from more sordid things, such as stealing the oil reserves, or using the marines to protect Wall Street investments in Latin-American countries, south and elsewhere.

In the Cleveland conference there was no danger of the reds. There were the respectables, forty-seven or forty-eighters, the manufacturers, the merchants, the bankers, the high-salaried labor leaders who used to be called red until they got high salaries. This little group had the job all done up with yellow ribbons and brooms made 148 years ago.

Some of us remember the experience of four years ago in Chicago when we were offered a certain prominent man for our candidate provided we would permit him to name his platform and take out all the substance. We refused.

The St. Paul meeting cared little for candidates; those assembled there wanted an organization of exploited wage workers and farmers. If there were Communists present who agreed to the platform, that was all right. We didn't want bankers and manufacturers. The purpose of the St. Paul meeting was the formation of a class party. The Cleveland group didn't want a party, they wanted a certain man.

In view of the situation it was apparent there could be no common ground of action. Inasmuch as the candidates selected in St. Paul were not Communists, and in view of the other fact that many of the farmers wanted a Farmer-Labor party with LaFollette as their choice as the candidate for president, there was going to be turmoil and division without the lines being very clearly drawn. In view of this situation it was deemed best to have a clear line of demarcation, and so I withdrew my name as a candidate.

The position now is clear cut. We have the Gold Dust twins of Wall Street masquerading under the names of "Democrat" and "Republican" (no one knows just why); we have the trust-busting middle-class group called LaFollette, and we have the lefts under the banner of Communism. One group representing big business, one representing the middle-class reformers, and the other openly espousing a workers' and farmers' government and the overthrow of the whole capitalist system.

If the voters divide on these lines there will be little doubt as to the outcome. Here we have them, right, center, left. To which group do you belong? Take your choice; the lines are clearly drawn. Right, Center, Left, Forward! March!

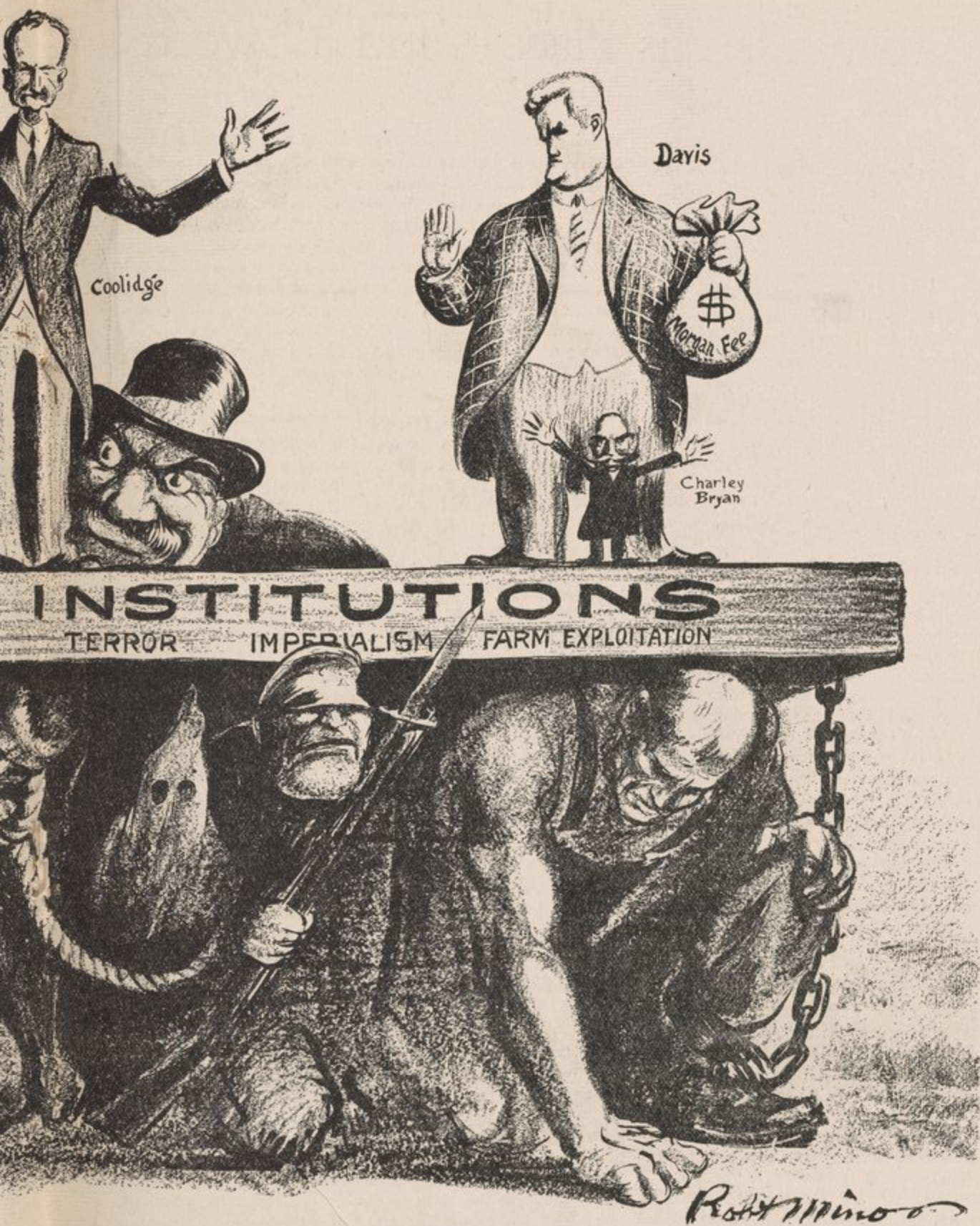




"We All Stand for Am

(And these are the Amer





American Institutions!"

(the American institutions)



# The Negro Finds His Place—and a Sword

By Robert Minor

THE political storm that is sweeping America today, tearing up old political parties and blowing all things into new lines of class arrangement, has reached the Negro. Anyone who attended the recent fifteenth annual conference of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People must be convinced that a black avalanche of twelve million people is about to crash through the landmarks of American political life. To the already roaring torrent of discontented workers and farmers is about to be added the Negro, who is also a worker and a farmer—and discontented.

The final significance of the Negro convention just closed in Philadelphia can be summed up in three points:

1. A mass tendency to break away from the Republican party.
2. A tendency to align the Negro liberation movement with the labor movement.
3. A tendency to discard the half-century-old policy of compromise on questions of race equality, and to plunge into a fight for the complete effacement of the caste system in America.

These tendencies, taken together, are of revolutionary significance. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is not a revolutionary organization. Its list of directors contains no Bolsheviks, but ranges from Negro bishops, white reform-ministers, colored lawyers, social workers and Republican politicians down to "retired" socialists. Yet this organization has undertaken from its beginning to deal with a problem which has no solution that is not revolutionary. It tries hard to be conservative, and at the same time be consistent in a field where consistency is impossible without bordering close upon the edges of revolutionary significance.

This is understood only when we realize that the Negro's loyalty to the Republican party has always meant the Negro's solidarity with the American capitalist class. That alliance with the capitalist class was in the beginning an alliance with industrial capitalism against the semi-feudal southern aristocracy. Historically it was perfectly justified; it was progressive—even revolutionary, in its first years. The great black statesman, Frederick Douglass, spoke well when he called his people to this alliance; but he left them a legacy which now weighs heavy upon them, in the slogan: "The Republican party is the ship; all else is the sea."

And now, the dominant note of the Negro convention is the treason of the Republican party to its ward, the Negro. Starting with an explosive remark of R. J. Coles of Philadelphia, that "If the Republican party is the ship, then I personally am going to take to swimming," the note was taken up by speaker after speaker until it threatened for a time to obscure every other concern. "Abraham Lincoln is dead," said this Negro convention. "Lincoln is not running for office this year." "The party of Lincoln was one thing, and the party of Calvin Coolidge is another." The outcry reached its crescendo in a mass meeting attended by five thousand

Negroes, which developed into one of the most picturesque debates since Lincoln's battle with Stephen A. Douglas. The scouts of the Republican party had evidently foreseen what was coming, and Theodore E. Burton, who had made the keynote speech at the Republican convention this year, was at this Negro convention to defend the Coolidge administration. Mr. Burton received one of the most merciless drubbings ever delivered in the form of words. James Weldon Johnson, a brilliant young Negro, coldly analyzed and demonstrated the "gentlemen's agreement" between the Democratic and the Republican parties against the Negro, which he said, and proved, had brought about the defeat of the anti-lynching bill in the senate.

### Groping for a New Alignment.

The convention expressed its resentment toward the Republican party by issuing a document suggesting the desirability of forming a new party to be composed of the Negro and "other submerged classes." This action was weak and confused enough; only later events brought out the significance that lies in any effort to form a party of the "submerged classes"—with the Negro in it. But for the moment I speak only of the significance of the Negro's beginning to recognize his problem as a labor problem.

The Negro was brought to America as labor. The Negro was kept in slavery for the value of his labor. The Negro question was a labor question throughout the two and a half centuries from the time of his arrival until the Civil War. The Negro question was a labor question in the politics that preceded the Civil War.

When the Civil War was won by the northern capitalist class, it was the triumph of one labor system over another. It was a solution of a labor question. The ultimate outcome of the Civil War of 1861-1865 was the completion of the system best adapted to modern capitalist exploitation of the laborer.

The Negro's emancipation can be completed only in the manner in which it was begun: by treating it as a labor class problem. Therefore, it was a bold step in advance when the convention adopted the following:

### OPEN LETTER TO THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR, THE RAILWAY BROTHERHOODS, AND OTHER GROUPS OF ORGANIZED LABOR.

"Gentlemen:

"For many years the American Negro has been demanding admittance to the ranks of union labor.

"For many years your organizations have made public profession of your interest in Negro labor, of your desire to have it unionized, and of your hatred of the black 'scab.'

"Notwithstanding this apparent surface agreement, Negro labor in the main is outside the ranks of organized labor, and the reason is first, that white union labor does not want black labor and secondly, black labor has ceased to beg admittance to union ranks because of its increasing value and efficiency outside the unions.



"We thus face a crisis in inter-racial labor conditions; the continued and determined race prejudice of white labor, together with the limitation of immigration, is giving black labor tremendous advantage. The Negro is entering the ranks of semi-skilled and skilled labor and he is entering mainly and necessarily as a 'scab.' He broke the great steel strike. He will soon be in a position to break any strike when he can gain economic advantage for himself.

"On the other hand, intelligent Negroes know full well that a blow at organized labor is a blow at all labor; that black labor today profits by the blood and sweat of labor leaders in the past who have fought oppression and monopoly by organization. If there is built up in America a great black bloc of non-union laborers, who have a right to hate unions, all laborers, black and white, eventually must suffer.

"Is it not time, then, that black and white labor get together? Is it not time for white unions to stop bluffing and for black laborers to stop cutting off their noses to spite their faces?

"We, therefore, propose that there be formed by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the American Federation of Labor, the Railway Brotherhoods and any other bodies agreed upon, an inter-racial Labor Commission.

"We propose that this Commission undertake:

"1. To find out the exact attitude and practice of national labor bodies and local unions toward Negroes and of Negro labor toward unions.

"2. To organize systematic propaganda against racial discrimination on the basis of these facts at the great Labor meetings, in local assemblies and in local unions.

"The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People stands ready to take part in such a movement and hereby invites the co-operation of all organized labor. The Association hereby solemnly warns American laborers that unless some such step as this is taken and taken soon the position gained by organized labor in this country is threatened with irreparable loss."

The strength of this action of the convention lies in the fact that it is a first historical effort of a modern Negro organization of mass influence, to line the Negro masses up with the new class which is destined to rise to power. The Negro's first step to equality is to attain equality in the organized working class. His second and final step to complete freedom will come with the rise of that class, black and white, to the position of the ruling class.

In a little Pennsylvania coal mining town a few weeks ago, a group of Czecho-Slovak and South-Slav coal-diggers worried over the fact that they seemed to obtain no adequate representation in the union's affairs, due to their inability to speak English. Their trouble was finally solved by a method which, I venture to predict, is prophetic of the future. The foreigners observed that not they alone were the outcasts, but that a little group of Negroes was also ignored and despised. Someone hit upon the idea of an alliance with the English-speaking pariahs—the Negroes. The Czecho-Slovak and South-Slav miners elected a Negro to go as their delegate to the Pennsylvania labor party con-



Lightning.

Hans Boettcher

vention, where the young Negro acquitted himself with honor.

This incident brings a sudden realization that the hundreds of thousands of Negroes who are flooding into the basic industries are sure to form a very heavy proportion of the English-speaking workers in the basic industries. For, little as it has been noted, the overwhelming majority of the workers in America's basic industries are immigrants from Europe, most of them suffering from unfamiliarity with the language of the country. And it is exactly these "heavy industries" which the Negroes are entering now in place of the old-time stream of immigrants from Europe.

The Negro convention at Philadelphia wanted to do something tangible toward aligning its people politically with other submerged classes. Right here it suffered from inexperience; it mistook Mr. LaFollette's convention of the "Conference for Progressive Political Action" for a convention of "other submerged classes." It sent a very dignified official letter to the LaFollette convention.

The Negroes were apparently unaware of some history of that small-business-men's organization which they might as well learn now. In 1920, when the first "Farmer-Labor" party was formed in Chicago, an offer of the presidential nomination was made to the small-business-men's leader, Senator LaFollette, on condition that he would agree to the platform. Mr. LaFollette refused the nomination on the ground that he objected to two points in the program. These two points were, 1—a meek demand for "industrial democracy," and, 2—a demand for political equality for Negroes. Mr. LaFollette said his objection to the demand for political



equality for the Negro was based solely on the ground of expediency. (That's what they all say.)

But the Negro convention, apparently not knowing of the incident of 1920, and not yet having learned that the small-business politicians cannot fight for the "submerged classes," sent the letter to the LaFollette convention. They also sent the same people a telegram on the Ku Klux Klan issue. Second only to the question of the Republican party, in recognized importance to the Negroes, was the Klan issue. Anyone who wants to know what the Ku Klux Klan is need only lay aside his respectable reform journals and come and listen for long hours to the stark recitals of events of murder, lust and "white terror" as told by the black-skinned eye-witnesses. An intimate picture of this scourge can alone be obtained from Negroes. For ten million black inhabitants of the South, never a day dawns that is not clouded with the terror of "the Klan." It is the living embodiment of peonage, fiendish torture and terrorization in every sphere of life.

This had not a little to do with everything else decided upon by the convention, including the question of the Republican party. Still inveigled with old memories of "the party of emancipation," the Negroes had anticipated their convention with a letter to President Coolidge asking him to state categorically his position in regard to the Ku Klux Klan. Coolidge had answered with a homily of campaign buncombe, without a mention of the Ku Klux Klan. If the little man in the White House only knew what a coward he made of himself in the eyes of those assembled Negroes! Smarting under the Republican convention's evasion, and then under the insult from Coolidge himself, the Negro convention sent an urgent appeal by telegraph to the LaFollette convention, as follows:

"The Fifteenth annual convention of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People does hereby express and record its unqualified protest at the action of the two major political parties in evading specific denunciation of the Ku Klux Klan by name.

"We urge the coming third party convention at Cleveland to seize this opportunity for courageous action by denouncing the Klan in unqualified terms and by specific designation.

"Resolved that this resolution be telegraphed to the resolutions committee of the convention."

Both messages were utterly ignored by Mr. LaFollette's convention! "Yes, LaFollette, yes, LaFollette!" Mr. William H. Johnston as chairman would not permit the communications even to be read to the convention.

After its own convention was over the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People sent its field organizer, William Pickens, to the Cleveland convention to see to the outcome of its requests. Mr. Pickens quite naturally asked a few minutes to address the convention. There was no obvious reason why he should not have been given the floor. The convention was a time-killing affair. The chairman was desperate, at times, to find a means of keeping the thing going while the committees were fixing up matters. Every possible "bunk-shooter," from sentimental small bankers to empty-headed society ladies, was imported to the platform to fill in the time between the singing of songs of personal eulogy of LaFollette. But when Chairman Johnston saw the mahogany face of Mr. Pickens, he merely promised the floor "at some time later on." Mr.

Pickens sat with the audience, and waited. He waited until he saw that Johnston was steering the convention to a sudden end. A majestic lady had just finished some pleasantries about "the women, the group that I represent," and Chairman Johnston was hastily smothering attempts to nominate a vice-presidential candidate, when the tall black man arose in the audience, shouting with a voice that couldn't be silenced, "You talk about the other groups? What about the American Negro? I guess the American Negro group has a right to be heard here?"—and, marching down the center aisle, jumped uninvited upon the platform. It was one of the only two spontaneous events in a long and tedious affair, and it took the audience by storm. Chairman Johnston, caught unawares, could only yield the floor. But while Pickens spoke, Johnston stood behind him with a running fire of low-spoken interruption, "Now don't talk long—only two minutes—understand?—only two minutes, now—get through quick."

Mr. Pickens made the mistake of his life: He made an eloquent plea that his race be remembered in this "new" political movement—but he failed to read to the convention the telegram on the Ku Klux Klan. Therefore, the delegates never knew that an important convention in Philadelphia had sent a formal message to their convention on one of the big issues of the day.

The Cleveland convention closed with the same position on the Klan issue that was taken by the Democratic and Republican conventions: "Cowardly evasion."

A few minutes later I asked Mr. Pickens to dinner. He because of the color of his face, and I because I was with him, were virtually thrown out of a restaurant. We wandered about the city of Cleveland, hungry and looking for a place where we could get a bite to eat. I had a taste of one of the petty humiliations that the American Negro, north and south, has to face every day of his life. We might almost as well have been in the middle of an uninhabited desert, until at last we found a humble working class "hashery" where we were permitted the privilege of buying a sandwich. An otherwise trivial incident such as this is necessary to teach a white man that any political movement that is going to awaken the great Negro masses to its support will have to delve into this question which obsesses every hour of the day, every day of the lives of millions.

But Mr. LaFollette represents an economic class that cannot become an ally of the Negro. Nothing is plainer than the fact that only the working class can espouse the black man's cause.

The question of class alliances plays an interesting role in the history of Negro emancipation. It can be summed up in three periods:

1. The period of primitive independent revolt.
2. The period of alliance with the northern industrial capitalist class, against chattel slavery.
3. The coming new period of alliance with the working class, against wage-slavery.

#### The Period of Independent Revolt.

The stage of independent, blind revolt of isolated groups of slaves through primitive armed insurrections, is recorded as beginning in Ayllon's colony in territory which later became South Carolina, in the year 1526, before the establishment of the permanent English colonial slave system. Dr.



W. E. B. DuBois in his book, "The Souls of Black Folk," wrote:

"Before 1750, while the fire of African freedom still burned in the veins of the slaves, there was in all leadership or attempted leadership but the one motive of revolt and revenge,—typified in the terrible Maroons, the Danish blacks, and Cato of Stono, and veiling all the Americas in fear of insurrection." Eighteen of such insurrections or attempts at insurrection are recorded as having occurred before the American Revolution of 1776. Particularly terrifying to the whites were two slave insurrections in New York in 1712 and 1741. The American revolutionary period developed a considerable movement for inclusion of slave emancipation among the demands of the revolution. Because of southern opposition the movement failed, although it continued to be current after the revolution. This is important because it was the first sign of a white ally for the Negro. It was finally killed when, in the years following the Revolution, the newly-perfected cotton gin made Negro slave-labor more than ever profitable and the black human cattle returned to the stage of unmitigated exploitation. The series of armed slave rebellions began anew in 1800. A dozen more attempts were organized by Negroes before the time of the Civil War, the most noted of which were Denmark Vesey's conspiracy at Charleston, South Carolina, in 1822 and the bloody revolt led by the black preacher, Nat Turner, in Virginia in 1831. The last of the purely Negro attempts occurred in Maryland in 1857.

#### The Period of Alliance With the Industrial Capitalist Class.

The next armed slave insurrection, in 1859, was remarkable in that it was not a rebellion of slaves alone, but was led by a white man—John Brown. For the Negro had begun an active period of alliance. A great stratum of society, an important economic class, had begun to find an interest in common with the Negro slave. The northern industrial capitalist class, in order to break the power of the semi-feudal South, was forced into the expedient of destroying chattel slavery. This necessity brought about a common interest between the Negro and the modern industrial capitalist class; and in the logic of history an alliance was formed. It was an alliance perfectly justified in a historical sense, with progressive—even revolutionary—effect for the Negro. Frederick Douglass, the run-away slave laborer who became one of the two great statesmen of the Civil War, was far-seeing and wise in advising his people into an alliance with the Republican party of the years 1854 to 1870. But the declining years of Douglass saw this alliance become first a farce, then a travesty and finally the betrayal of the Negro people by the one-time ally, become an enemy.

Once having made the Negro a wage laborer, the industrial capitalist class had laid the foundation for its own enmity to the Negro. For the capitalist class has the function in life of exploiting labor. The Negro has become a wage laborer or poor farmer, to whom the capitalist class must now play the role of Simon Legree. The Louisiana sugar-cane planter of 1840, buying Negro laborers at \$800 apiece, could afford to "wear 'em out in eight years." Gary, in his steel mills in 1924, renting Negro laborers from themselves at 43 cents an hour, can afford to "wear 'em out" at an unlimited rate of speed with no cost whatever for replacement.

Gradually the economic interests of the capitalist class drew the Republican party into accepting and supporting the caste system as a useful and parallel reinforcement to the class system. The smug capitalist spokesman, Walter Francis Wilcox, writing in the Encyclopaedia Britannica, puts it this way:

"Neither the earlier system of slavery nor the governmental theory during the radical reconstruction period that race differences should be ignored has proved workable, and the trend is now toward some modus vivendi between these extremes." (Vol. 19, p. 346)

"Along with this decrease of pressure from without the southern states and the development of economic competition between the races within them, there has gone an increased demand on the part of the whites for a complete social separation between the races in school, in church, in public conveyances and hotels, all founded upon a fear that any disregard of such separateness will make intermarriage or fruitful illegal unions between the races more frequent. In short, these developments are towards a more and more rigid caste system." (Vol. 19, p. 349—my emphasis)

The industrial transformation of the South, successfully accomplishing the subjugation of the Negro on the new basis as a wage laborer and tenant-farmer, generated at last a philosophy of defeat, submission and hopelessness.

Mr. Booker T. Washington was the prophet of the period of submission. The public remembers Mr. Washington principally as "the Negro who once ate dinner with Roosevelt at the White House." But strange to say, that memorable show of "social equality" with the arch-dramatist Roosevelt, was an occasion marking the complete abdication of all claims for equality on the part of the Negro leadership. Mr. Washington was received as the already recognized spokesman for the Negro's surrender to the white ruling class as an inferior cog in the industrial machine. Dr. DuBois wrote:

"Mr. Washington distinctly asks that the black people give up, at least for the present, three things:

"First, political power.

"Second, insistence on civil rights.

"Third, higher education of Negro youth—

and concentrate all their energies on industrial education, the accumulation of wealth, and the conciliation of the South."

Dr. DuBois found that the result of fifteen years of Mr. Washington's leadership was:

"1. The disfranchisement of the Negro.

"2. The legal creation of a distinct status of civil inferiority for the Negro.

"3. The steady withdrawal of aid from institutions for the higher training of the Negro."

Mr. Washington died in the second year of the world war, just at the time when his leadership of the Negro would have had to die anyway.

The World War of 1914-1918 is almost as great a milestone in the life of the American Negro as the Civil War of 1861-1865. The experiences of mobilization stirred the black masses of the backward South into a new restlessness; then came the Klan terror; and at the same time the shutting off of the immigrant industrial labor supply from Europe sucked great floods of Negroes from the South into the north-





The "Superior Caste"

Adolph Dehn

ern industrial districts. Three-quarters of a million Negroes became for the first time urban industrial laborers. The migration turned the eyes of twelve millions toward industrial employment as "the way out." Out of it came every conceivable kind of impulse toward self-assertion of a race on the part of the Negro. The "New Negro" standing before the lynching mob with a gun in his hand, was one surprising new phenomenon. There was an acceleration of effort and jealous pride in business enterprises launched by Negroes, with renewed claims to loyalty to Negro business men who succeeded. An extensive cultural movement of literature, music and drama by Negro artists brought some remarkable results, at least by demonstrating that the Negro's genius in this direction is as good as the white man's.

Stirred to a new race-confidence and yet finding that the caste system followed them from the South to the North—there was born in the Negro a new determination and self-reliance for putting aside the Booker Washington compromise and demanding the abolition of the caste system in toto.

The new racial self-respect and quickened intelligence caused a distaste for the thin political mulligan of the Republican party's soup-kitchen, and a flash of understanding of the "gentlemen's agreement" of Republicans and Democrats for the defrauding of the simple black man.

The skeptical attitude on the part of the Negro intellectuals came just at the time that the Republican leaders began to feel the need of extending the Republican party among the ruling class of the South. As long as the Republican party was the "Nigger party," this could not be done. A strong "Lily-White" movement (for confining the Republican party councils entirely to whites and making an appeal to the Southern aristocracy) arose under the leadership of such men as C. Bascom Slemple of Virginia.

In the campaign of 1920, the late President Harding felt impelled to go to Birmingham, Alabama, where he made his famous speech expressing himself as "uncompromisingly against every suggestion of social equality."

President Harding in making this speech was promising the southern white ruling class that the Republican party would help to preserve the caste system in the South. This incident might be chosen at random as marking the beginning of the end of the alliance of the Negro with the Republican party.

#### "Social Equality."

What is the institution of caste? Describing it as it exists in India, H. G. Wells says: "It is a complicated horizontal division of the social structure into classes or castes, the members of which may neither eat nor intermarry with persons of a lower caste under penalty of becoming outcasts, and who may also 'lose caste' for various ceremonial negligences and defilements. By losing caste a man does not sink to a lower caste; he becomes outcast. The various subdivisions of caste are very complex; many are practically trade organizations. Each caste has its local organization which maintains discipline, distributes various charities, looks after its own poor, protects the common interests of its members, and examines the credentials of newcomers from other districts." Wells adds in a footnote that the Indian word for caste is "varna," which means color. (Outline of History, vol. 1, p. 269).

This description fits painfully well the American institution of race-relationships; the only variation being the relative simplicity here. It is plain that there is no such thing possible as a caste system with equality between the castes—the division is a horizontal division; one group being above, the other below. The southern Democratic slogan of "White Supremacy," is only a franker way of stating the Republican slogan of "no social equality"—both meaning the preservation of the caste system.

"Social equality" is the point where centers all the fear, dread, caution, evasiveness—and hope—of the Negro question. "Social equality" is an expression that will throw any discussion into panic. Negroes' "friends" usually evade it, unless discreetly to say, "Of course, nobody believes in that." "Social equality" is generally conceived to apply only to personal relations—to leisure associations and voluntary intimacies which are assumed to be outside of the province of political affairs.

But the communist Workers Party does not and cannot ignore the question of a caste system. This is a revolutionary party—the only existing revolutionary party. As such, it is different from all other political movements in exactly this: that it does and must seek deliberately to destroy the existing class and caste relations in society. If it is suggested to us that a question of "social equality" is not a question of government, we can only reply that we are not only a "political" party (in the sense that other parties are political), but we are the political party of social revolution. Not mere change in the surface of life, but the deepest social overturn, with the uprooting of every kind of inequality and every trace of class division, is our distinguishing purpose. It is recognized by the most superficial historian that the presence of a caste system in any nation is one of the unmistakable signs of backwardness in evolution. Is it thinkable that the party of proletarian revolution could leave unchallenged a caste system? When alleged friends of the Negro make a reservation against "social equality," they mean that they are supporters of the caste system, which



cannot co-exist with a free society. The Communist stands absolutely for equality of the the Negro without reservations.

#### The World View.

The American Negro, if he wishes to add to his power to solve his people's problem, must let his eyes sweep a broader field than that of New York's Harlem and Chicago's South Side. He must look outward into a great world that is bursting with change. He will see impending transformations that surpass anything ever before known in the earth's history—changes in the world's race-adjustments greater than Attila or Ghengis Khan ever knew.

The Negro who will replace his provincial view with a broad cosmopolitan outlook, will see a world of 1,750,000,000 people being ruled with force by a small and unstable minority. He will see that a vast majority of the world's population is made up of colored races, held under precarious control through the deceit, division and trickery of a small minority of supposedly superior white imperial powers.

He will see that a vast majority of the world's population—about 1,100,000,000—are peoples more or less marked with color, and all held under subjection of a white-skinned minority which was until recently, about 650,000,000 in number. Of this minority he will see that about 150,000,000 have recently split away from the imperialist camp (in the Russian revolution), reversing position and joining as the most militant partisans the camp of the suppressed races struggling for liberation. Thus we have about 1,250,000,000 of the world's 1,750,000,000 population definitely or potentially linked up with the cause of the liberation of all races and the establishment of full race equality for black, white, yellow and brown races throughout the world without distinction. The one and three-quarter billions are face-to-face with their tyrants who number only a half-billion. It is a ratio of three and a half to one in favor of the darker races. And within each of the imperialist nations is the working-class revolutionary Communist movement which is destined to lead the masses within those imperialist nations against their ruling class.

#### The World Center for Suppressed Peoples.

The forces for liberation of the darker peoples have, since the Russian revolution, naturally gravitated to a cultural center in the capital of the one country where alone they cannot be reached by the police-arm of the enemy they plan to vanquish. At this moment, one of Britain's many propagandists, Sir Valentine Chirol, is touring the United States trying to prepare this country to line up for the side of White Supremacy in the oncoming world-clash. "Bolshevism," he said in a lecture in Chicago, "has poured forth over the whole of Central Asia like a devastating flood." (Devastating to white European imperialist rule over the "inferior" peoples of Asia.) He continues: "On November 2, 1917, Lenin issued a decree proclaiming for all peoples, and not least for all Oriental peoples, the right of self-determination. But when Moscow began to organize its vast system of Bolshevik propaganda it was nowhere more active than in Central Asia. In 1920 a Communist University of Workers in the East was founded in Moscow . . . and branches were soon opened at Tashkent, Baku and Irkutsk." Reaching the sorest spot of his lament—the vast empire of India whose 294,000,000 people are the beasts of burden for

the British ruling class—Sir Valentine wails that in India "the trade unions, which are springing up like mushrooms, are mainly in the hands of professional agitators who might almost have themselves graduated at Moscow, for Moscow boasts of the special attention devoted in its various Oriental colleges to the training of Bolshevik 'missionaries' with the requisite knowledge to rouse, as its organ, the *Novy Vostok* (New East) puts it, 'the whole colonial world of the oppressed, not only in Asia, but in Africa and America, against the capitalistic society of Europe and the United States.'"

The alarmed gentleman continued:

"All the manifold discontents of the Orient are bound up together in the clash of color . . . In America you have the color problem in your very midst; you have it again at your doors in the shape of Asiatic immigration. We in Europe are confronted, along the great borderland of the . . . and the Orient extending through Northern Africa . . . across Western and Central Asia, from the Northwest Atlantic to the shores of the Indian Ocean, and even beyond."

#### The Negro Center of Culture.

In the midst of this world situation, the American Negro is placed in a position of peculiar responsibility. For America is the cultural center of the great Black group among these submerged colored races. America, as the cultural center of the Negro world, must be called upon to furnish the intellectual leaders of the Negro people of the entire world.

Of course, it is possible for the American Negro intellectual to play an entirely opposite role. The American ruling class will have plenty of use for "handkerchief-heads" among Negro intellectuals during the stirring struggles for liberation that are coming. Denmark Vesey, together with his thirty-four brave lieutenants, was "turned up" to the master of the "big house" by a household servant of his own race. Just so today, there are many Negroes with the immense advantage of education who find it easy to say "We love American institutions," of which one of the most important is "White Supremacy"—the caste system.

But there is little question that Negro intellectual leadership is being developed.

### The Answer

I WAS alone, at last, with God  
And I spoke to Him face to face  
Why have you set a curse  
A curse on the black man's race.

Why must he carry the cross  
Why must he kiss the rod  
Answer me here and now  
Thus did I speak with God.

God answered me not at all  
I waited for Him to smite  
The silence was worse than speech  
Then I saw that God was WHITE.

Ruth Loomis Skeen.



# Will the I. W. W. Fight Decadence?

By Harrison George

FOR many years, especially during the hysteria of the war period, the newspapers of the western states have exaggerated every arrest of the migratory workers who carry the membership card of the Industrial Workers of the World (I. W. W.) into remarkable captures of daring criminals. Always, however, they cautiously qualify the charge by stating that the prisoners are "alleged" I. W. W. This coupling of the wildest crimes with "alleged" I. W. W. has provoked both anger and laughter from the I. W. W. membership, which regards itself as anything but criminal. Around the word "alleged" there has been woven the ironic story of an employer who was deeply pleased when he hired a man whom he found was a real, sure-enough I. W. W. "It is them pesky alleged I. W. W. that's always up to mischief," he remarked, recalling the wild yarns of the newspapers.

Carrying the irony a bit further, it may be said that the "alleged" I. W. W. and not the real Old Guard are in control of the organization. This Old Guard, vaguely defined as the old members, those whose lives are entwined with its heroic past, who gladly suffered for it because it represented, in the years before the birth of the Communist movement, the most revolutionary section of the American proletariat, have lost the helm, ideologically if not officially, to an inferior and non-revolutionary group. The latter have some revolutionary phrases on tap for sake of appearances, but they—even though some are old members—represent a "pure and simple" unionist type, and are no more revolutionary because they advocate "industrial unionism" than is John L. Lewis. It is a case, familiar to the labor movement the world over, of the "unionist" as against the "revolutionist."

The Old Guard have lost out. Not all of them know it yet. There is enough pretense to make some of them feel at home, but not quite contented with the new housekeepers. Even when fully disillusioned, their old loyalty inclines them to passive acceptance, or a foolish quitting of the organization. They do everything but the one thing needed, to crystallize their protest into a definite program for concurrent revival of revolutionary spirit with organizational adjustment to a new historical era—the era of the decline of capitalism.

## A Million Members—If?

An I. W. W. with a million members instead of the 40,000 it has, and with the spirit of the old I. W. W. is not impossible if only the Old Guard backed by revolutionary recruits would see and do their duty. Not that the Old Guard are perfect types. Most of them are absolutely wrong on dual unionism, having learned nothing from twenty years of attempts to break up the conservative unions, nor conceived any new idea from the fact that the only success the I. W. W. has is among migratory, unskilled labor where they fight the boss instead of fighting another union.

The Old Guard also have pre-war minds, don't know or gain the significance of the fact of capitalist decline, nor the wide difference between Socialist and Communist politics, nor, in the case of soviets, do they know a revolution when they see it. The worst feature of this is that the best class fighters among them, equipped with a measure of revolu-

tionary philosophy acquired before the world was shaken by war and revolution, refuse resolutely to read, will not study Communist books, do not know that Leninism is Marxism in action reshaping the world movement. They are tragically self-satisfied and will learn only from bitter self-experience. But the Old Guard were not class pacifiers, did not renounce class struggle, nor internationalism, nor the revolutionary goal. They usually did not misrepresent a working class opponent, nor abuse their position as official servants of the membership by such unbelievable censorship as is now robbing the rank and file of information, free discussion and initiative within the organization.

For instance, if Trautman, Haywood or St. John had been General Secretary-Treasurer, and Charles Lambert or Richard Brazier had been Chairman of the General Executive Board, the important communication addressed not only to those officials but to the membership of the I. W. W. by the Red International of Labor Unions (R. I. L. U.) through a committee of I. W. W. members on May 8, would not have met the wall of despotic censorship it did at the hands of pigmy bureaucrats now occupying those offices.

## Secret Censorship Against Membership Rights.

In that instance, such a communication would have been published freely, and free discussion would have followed among the membership, which ought to be interested in the following informative but inadequate quotations from the Red International to the Industrial Workers of the World:

"Only the most backward members of the working class do not conceive that the class struggle is international. . . . International organizations are inevitably formed by affiliating existing organizations. The R. I. L. U. is the International to which the I. W. W. should affiliate in its own best interests. The R. I. L. U. unites 13,000,000 workers of 42 countries, and bases its struggle upon revolutionary industrial unionism, bases these unions on the point of production in Factory and Job Committees . . . to control production.

"The R. I. L. U. does not share syndicalist prejudices toward a revolutionary party of Communism . . . Nevertheless, wishing to attain unity with the sincere syndicalist workers . . . the R. I. L. U. severed the organic connection which united it to the Communist International.

"This should result in affiliation by the I. W. W., but intrigue has shut out of I. W. W. papers any refutation of the lie that the R. I. L. U. seeks to 'liquidate' the I. W. W. We officially declare such statement to be a falsehood. The American program of the R. I. L. U. is adapted to American conditions, as publication in the I. W. W. press would show.

"The R. I. L. U. invites the whole membership of the I. W. W. to co-operate with the militants in the trade unions and the Communists in the Workers Party on specific points of defensive and aggressive struggle against reaction. . . . Also invites the G. E. B. of the I. W. W. to authorize delegates to present its views to the Third Congress of the R. I. L. U., which will convene July 5 at Moscow."

Although the G. E. B. acknowledged receipt of this document from the Red International Affiliation Committee, it was not published as requested nor even was news of it



given in the I. W. W. press, the censors evidently fearing that the membership would demand publication if they knew of its existence.

#### Hypocrisy and Metaphysics.

The above is not the only instance of the censorship which is paralyzing the I. W. W. At my "heresy trial" last November, on subterfuge charges of "disruption" because I had previously denounced censorship, ample proof was offered of a most vicious censorship—not at all the legitimate control of the press under which it is excused—and I was exonerated of the charge of "disruption." But the evil persists. H. R. Richards has tried for months to get into the General Office Bulletin a brief answer to an attack made on him and his ideas. Every time he is asked about its publication, Fisher, Chairman of the G. E. B., grins and promises, but nothing happens besides hypocrisy.

The most viciously stupid censors are the committee which is slowly strangling the "Industrial Worker" of Seattle. Perilous to the organization, the censors of this paper succeed at times in being ludicrous in their efforts to print a paper without saying anything revolutionary. Listen to this editorial from their issue of May 24:

"This organization views humanity without a horizon, where centered in the scientific empyrean the cosmos is revealed to its illimitable reaches. To circumscribe such splendor, to chart such infinity, is the role of minds near-sighted; to expand in this beauty and completeness is the privilege of eager-eyed youth, the joy of the children of the morning who cluster around the knees of industrial unionism. Our I. W. W. is humanity plus a soul."

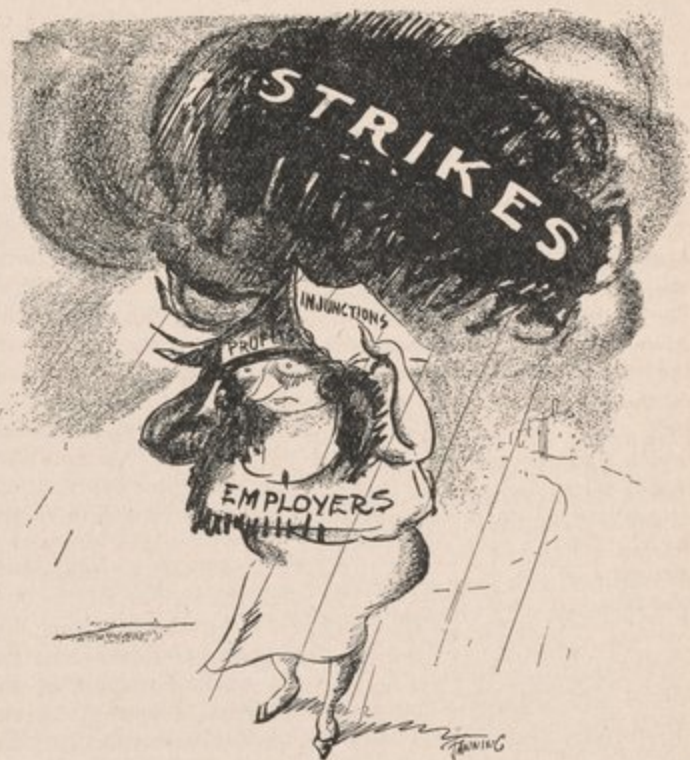
As usual, such metaphysical bunk is used to cover up something rotten. The same issue says, "Remember, fellow workers, the 'Industrial Worker' is your own paper. There are no bars between you and its columns." The next issue says, "Criticism is welcomed by this paper." But what are the facts?

Last October I had denounced censorship in connection with its practice against the Centralia victims imprisoned at Walla Walla. On November 21, the then editor said that the claim that a member of the I. W. W. had to use the columns of other papers than those of the I. W. W. to set forth his ideas to his fellow workers, was false. Being a member, I submitted on January 22, an article answering the many and vile lies against Soviet Russia sent in by non-members like the girl anarchist Mollie Steimer, and published prominently in the "Industrial Worker."

#### "Industrial Worker" Committee Didn't Print This.

What happened? My article, written by a member, answering many articles written by non-members, was refused on the grounds that the soviets were a political formation, and "every political formation must be crushed by whatever means is necessary." And the "Industrial Worker" Committee in a letter of refusal, officially elaborated the following crystallization of anarchist nonsense:

"All political groups are organizations formed outside of industry for the purpose of controlling people. This necessarily carries with it the function of controlling the workers in the industries. The particular form or personnel of the political organization is of no moment. The members of a political organization may even be entirely of and in the in-



William S. Fanning

"Mercy me! I must protect my hat!"

dustries, but if they have a formation outside the industries and decide matters that are not under direct control of the workers in the industries, they become in fact, a government that is not of the workers. They are a group that is foreign to the workers and as such, their entire activity must be toward repression and subjection of those workers."

On April 28, I returned the article for reconsideration with a letter which has received no reply just as the article itself has not been printed. As my letter undertook to puncture the whole philosophic bubble of "economism" and anarcho-syndicalist bureaucracy so prevalent in the I. W. W., I quote freely as follows:

"Your Committee did not dare to publish my article together with your anarchist sophistry and confusion and let the membership form its own opinion. By this act your Committee shows that its argument applies with particular force to itself. Let us examine your Committee and its acts in the light of its own brilliant theorizing:

"The 'Industrial Worker' Committee is formed outside of industry. Therefore, it is a political organization. The particular form or personnel is of no moment. It may be the capitalist state run by Coolidge repressing the workers; or it may be, and in this case is, the 'Industrial Worker' Committee repressing the I. W. W. membership. Even though the members of the Committee may be entirely of and in the industries still the Committee itself is a formation outside of industry where they decide to refuse to publish articles and do such other things as are not under direct control of the workers in industry. Therefore, the 'Industrial Worker' Committee is, in fact, a government, which is foreign to the workers and whose entire activity toward repressing



and subjecting those workers is so plainly proven by the actions of your Committee itself.

"You say, 'every political formation is a menace and must be crushed by whatever means is necessary.' What means are necessary to crush the powerful formation known as the capitalist state? Can you explain what means are forceful enough and centralized and disciplined enough to crush the capitalist state, which will not be itself a formation outside of industry, even if of those who are entirely of and in the industries? Do you approve of such means? Then you must approve of the soviet government which is the dictatorship of the proletariat."

#### Class Struggle Swapped for "Spiritual Values."

Pacifism, civil peace, the "burgfrieden" of the social-democrats, has had a steady growth in the I. W. W. Unlike the socialists, they did not flop suddenly with the war crisis. As an economic organization it could not go underground and avoid persecution, a disability it strangely interprets as a virtue connected with the fine resistance its revolutionary elements have shown under fire. But one cannot justify present decadence by pointing to an honorable past.

Now that it can be told, it is well to remark that the war crisis broke the I. W. W. ideologically by widening the difference between the merely "unionist" element and the revolutionaries. As early even as the Chicago trial the "pure and simple" unionists gained the upper hand, and many of those whose Leavenworth fame is based on their struggle for "free speech," never in war time used this "right" to utter one word against the world murderfest. Some boast of this as if it were to their credit. Not being organized as a minority, the revolutionists have continued to lose ground. Too well satisfied with the past and the preamble, they fail to provide the organization with a program and fail to fight the leaders of decadence to carry that program and preamble into effect.

In prison as well as outside, the I. W. W. has suffered because it lacked a revolutionary minority organization within it. In Leavenworth every crisis the whole group faced, in tactical issues dealing with parole, pardon and amnesty, found us programless and confused merely because there was no left wing organized to foresee the crisis, formulate and propagate a program and forestall confusion and splits. The whole prison group fell into the government's trap, broke in two over "accepting commutation" on conditions and carried this senseless quarrel outside, ruinously splitting the unions over this "political" question. A clear left wing could have prevented this. I do not refer to a Communist minority, but simply a revolutionary left wing organization, exactly like the Trade Union Educational League groups in the A. F. of L.

"Industrial research and survey" was the first definite effort to dodge revolutionary struggle. But that became too expensively impossible. Gradually the fight against capitalist government was abandoned for the fight against the workers' soviet government and Communists generally. But these phenomena obstinately persisted. Fighting them involved too much thinking for some, who turned to metaphysics.

The humanitarian side of the class struggle was found to appeal to liberals with money. To defend themselves against stupid reaction, a slow exchange has been effected by which class struggle has been traded for liberal ideas accompanying defense funds. Humanitarianism was not enough. Non-resistance, with Jesus and all the masochistic early

Christians were dragged in to serve instead of proletarian revolution. The present officials issued a "Reply to State's Attorneys," saying, "The I. W. W. does not preach class-hatred. Class hatred is class-craziness." Released Leavenworth prisoners become mystics, and Red Doran talks of "spiritual values," while Frank Westerlund, once editor of an I. W. W. paper and bitterly anti-Communist, has gone clear over and joined the church.

#### The Neglected Fighters of Centralia.

The decadence has its negative side. Especially in the shameful neglect of the heroes of Centralia, I. W. W. men who in 1919, with guns in hand, defended their union hall against a Legionaire mob. Eight of them are serving sentences of forty years, not for "criminal syndicalism," which is respectable and sounds good to liberals, but for "murder." Many and bitter are the complaints of these prisoners at their neglect. They complain against individual officers. But the whole philosophy of decadence, of "economism" and class peace is to blame, together with the censorship which hides it all.

In every other union of America there is a left wing fighting to bring the larger conservative unions into revolutionary struggle. Discontent in the I. W. W. is just as deep and wide as in the A. F. of L., but as long as the protest is not made vocal in spite of censorship, and until the revolutionary Old Guard or the rebel recruits stop tearing up their cards and quitting and begin to unite to revive and rebuild the organization, their discontent fritters out in individual grumbling and the I. W. W.—regardless of membership figures—slips onward to decadence.

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# Fascist Violence and Revolutionary Violence

By Charles Rappoport

MENTION of the problem of violence brings spontaneously to mind the name of George Sorel, author of "Reflections on Violence." Since 1899-1901, the period of my collaboration in the "Socialist Review," until his death in 1922, I continued friendly relations with the celebrated theoretician of revolutionary syndicalism. George Sorel knew that I did not agree with his fundamental conceptions. This did not prevent our having cordial relations. On the contrary, George Sorel thought somewhat like Proudhon, his first teacher, who left indelible traces upon his mind. When Proudhon learned that there were "Proudhonians," he cried; "They must be imbeciles!" Sorel was simplicity itself, of good faith and always ready, like Proudhon himself, to demolish today what his thought, always searching for truth, had constructed yesterday.

Sorel knew Marx, but during all his long philosophic career he never ceased to apply the metaphysical method of Proudhon, which was based on "principles" instead of contenting itself, like Marx's, with the scientific analysis of facts. Also, Sorel adopted the "principle" of violence in itself. A Marxist never speaks of democracy in itself, of liberty in itself or simply of liberty, of war in general or of violence in itself. Everything depends upon the circumstances. Everything must be considered as functioning in time and space, or to use a current expression, everything is "according to—." Violence is bad when it serves the reactionary cause or helps to perpetuate a regime of violence and of the exploitation of man by man. Violence is wholesome and necessary when it serves to relieve the social body of a gangrenous member which threatens it with death. Violence is beneficial when it suppresses by a sudden act a chronic state of violence. In one word, violence "in itself" is neither revolutionary nor reactionary. It is revolutionary when it serves a revolutionary cause, and becomes reactionary and counter-revolutionary when employed against a regime of emancipation and a class whose historic mission it is, to leap to a new stage of society.

Of all this George Sorel never took account. He glorified violence in itself as a "principle" of vital energy. He pushed his metaphysics of violence so far as even to exalt the violence of the master-class against the workers, as being a good school for the militant proletariat which was prevented thereby from falling into softness. George Sorel cordially detested the word-mongers of the humanitarians and reformers. He threatened to "pull them off of their high horse."

In this exaltation of violence in itself, Sorel, like Proudhon before him in his paradoxical book on "War and Peace," met in thought such glorifiers of war as Joseph de Maistre or the Pan-German Bernhardi. This explains why his "Reflections on Violence" had great popularity in Italy, and why many an Italian admirer of Sorel finds himself today in the camp of the Fascisti.

The metaphysics of violence is not only reactionary, but absurd. Violence does not create, it destroys. If it is a question of the destruction of an obstacle to social progress, violence resembles the beneficent operation of a surgeon. This is not the case with nationalist capitalism, which sees in war-like violence the supreme means of saving its privileges. It is in revolution that capitalism sees the enemy to be destroyed. We condemn Fascism, not as violence in itself, but as violence put to the service of privilege and of a society founded upon violence and unable to live without it.

The working class is the producing class; it hates destruction and admits the necessity of only one destruction; the destruction of the capitalist regime which can exist today only by murder and misery. The triumphant social revolution will put an end forever to violence. Production will replace destruction, and the producing class will replace the destroying class.



R. Volker

Hunger



# Literature and the Machine Age

By Floyd Dell

## XIII.

IN the serious realistic fiction of the late nineteenth century, we found ample reassurance for a sublime indifference toward life. More now than ever were the writers, and artists in general, divorced from serious participation in the affairs of the world. Busy though they might be at easel or desk, however preoccupied they were with the sacred mysteries of technique, they were as regards the general life of mankind idlers and onlookers. And it was from them that we learned what might be termed the super-vagabond point of view.

### An Onlooker.

From this point of view the world is simply a spectacle—something to look at. People who are busy, of course, in any ordinary sense, cannot regard the world as a spectacle. They have to regard it as an opportunity for the fulfillment of their wishes. They are too concerned with what they want to do, to stop to consider how foolish they may look trying to do it. Thus the ants, a proverbially busy tribe, have probably not the least idea how queer their endeavors appear to a disinterested eye. But to anyone who does not share the passions of anthood, the spectacle of ant life is at once amusing and tragic. And when we had learned to set ourselves apart from the passions of contemporary humanity, the spectacle of its life was no less amusing and tragic. That was, in fact, just what contemporary life looked to our disinterested view—a foolish and sad scurrying about of ants.

We did not think of this, however, as a super-vagabondish point of view. And as a matter of fact it is a point of view found not alone among super-vagabonds. It is also to be found in any aristocracy, among that minority, that super-aristocracy whose members have had the opportunity to get what they wanted, and have found out that it did not satisfy them after all. The best minds in an aristocracy, as we observed, tend to cease from participation in the human struggle; tend merely to look on, with cynicism or with pity, as the case might be. To them—as to the vagabond Elizabethan dramatists who found it easy enough to look at life from the point of view of their aristocratic patrons—all the world's a stage and all the men and women merely players.

This super-aristocratic, spectacular and tragic point of view we found traditionally exemplified for us in the attitude of some of the Greek poets. Not in all of them, by any means; Pindar, for instance, we discovered to be as seriously interested in sports as the sales manager of a business firm today in his fall campaign. The winning of a race was as important to him, as serious and significant a matter, as the taking away of a rival's best customer is today. But there were other poets in Ancient Greece who did not take even the Pan-Athenaic Games seriously, and who would naturally not condescend to a naive interest in the less important concerns of life. Chief of these was Sophocles, who wrote in what his contemporaries considered the Grand Style—not so stilted and outlandish as that of Aeschylus, but high aloof from the warm homeliness of the language of Euripides; and

whose attitude was one with his style. To Sophocles life was essentially a tragic spectacle; and if to Sophocles, why not then to us? We read the beginning of his most famous chorus (omitting a difficult mathematical metaphor): "O ye deathward going tribes of men, what do your lives mean save that ye go toward death?"

Those tribes, in Greece as in our own contemporary world, had not stopped to think of that. It took disinterested observers like Sophocles and ourselves to note that while they thought they were going to the races, or to the forum, or home to dinner, they were really going just so much nearer toward death. That being the truth, then art consisted in the exemplification of the inevitable course of that spectacular progression.

### The Detached Attitude.

It was a literary circumstance of no mean importance, apparently, that the super-aristocrats and super-vagabonds of later times, who between them have produced most of our literature, were able to reinforce their habit of seeing life as a spectacle by the sacred and unquestioned tradition of Greek drama. This high precedent, to be sure, had not made the busy and aspiring lower classes like tragedy any better. They had instinctively preferred romance and comedy. They wanted encouragement in their hopes and forgetfulness of their troubles.

It was not strange that when, toward the latter part of the nineteenth century, fiction began to break loose from its middle-class trammels, and determined bravely to represent life not as the middle classes wished to believe it to be, but as it was—it was not strange that the new literary effort should have modeled itself more or less consciously on the Sophoclean tradition.

The Sophoclean tradition, it is true, had in the meantime become somewhat modernized and Darwinized by the professors. To bring Sophocles into line with our scientific notions, world ruled over by Fate was interpreted in terms of the "struggle for existence." He was supposed to have intended in his plays to exhibit some "fatal flaw" or other by reason of which his characters were doomed to overwhelming ruin. It was simply the inability of the Unfit to survive. And the Unfit, as we came more and more to see, were unfit by reason of their good qualities.

Even in the case of the unfortunate Emma Bovary (whose history became the model of all our efforts), it was her virtues that doomed her. Thackeray had sought to show that Becky Sharp came to grief because she was a bad woman. It was to us the measure of the difference between the sentimentality of the Victorian period and the candor of our own, that we could see Emma's ruin in the fact that she was not sufficiently bad—not selfish, callous nor unscrupulous enough.

And in truth the reason why we were so interested in these tragic failures of fiction was that they were symbols of ourselves. We pitied ourselves, because our love of beauty put us at a disadvantage in this hard world; it was the un-



scrupulous and hard who succeeded, while we slaved in our garrets. And the value of this neo-Greek tradition, with its emphasis upon the inevitable doom which awaits all loveliness, was that it served to lift from our minds the burden of an unmanly self-pity. If we conceived of ourselves as flowers crushed under the brutal hoof of commercialism, it helped us to reflect that hoofs are stronger than flowers. We even forced ourselves to admire the tremendous rhythm of the gesture by which the stronger crushed the weaker to death. And if we disdained to pity ourselves, we were certainly not going to pity anybody else. Life, we felt, consisted so largely of spilt milk that there was no use crying over it—we might just as well celebrate the magnificent inevitability of the spilling. And if the hard indifference which we achieved was actually neither Greek nor scientific, it was at least the best we outcast vagabonds could do to maintain our dignity under the circumstances.

#### The Indifference of the Artist.

But it was less from fiction than from the art of painting that we acquired the finer points of our late nineteenth century attitude toward life. Fiction itself was discovering from the painters what it itself ought to be. It was felt that writers had ceased to be artists, in a sense in which painters had remained artists. We had much to learn from our more uncompromising brothers of the brush, and we went humbly to school, first to Whistler, and then to Manet.

It was undoubtedly true that the painters, or some of them at least, had retained more of the play spirit, and more freedom from the demands of bourgeois society and of the machine-age in general. They had brilliantly, and often heroically, refused to be in the slightest degree useful to a civilization which they hated. And as literature became more consciously the expression of an artistic attitude toward life, it was inevitable that it should seek inspiration in the formulas of the newer schools of painting.

In our day the Whistler influence was still powerful in literature. We remembered with indignation the libelous statement by Ruskin that one of the Whistler nocturnes was "a pot of paint flung in the public's face." And yet, from our own point of view, Ruskin had stated in those words, vividly if not quite accurately, the essential characteristic of the Whistler attitude. If he had described the painting as several tubes of paint more or less effectively distributed upon a piece of canvas, Whistler might, instead of suing him for damages, have said: "Ah! At last I am understood!" For that was precisely what Whistler himself had been saying all along when he called his paintings "Arrangements" in various colors.

Painting, under the Whistlerian influence, had repudiated the obligation of being anything except beautiful. But, at the same time, in the endeavor to be beautiful, it had had to repudiate the infinite variety of color and form in the daylight world, and confine itself to those moments when color and form are least harsh and uncompromising. The skyline of a factory-town, for instance, is most beautiful, to those to whom capitalism is most unintelligible and most hateful, when it least looks like what it is—for instance, at twilight, when it has ceased to be a chaos of smokestacks and becomes a suggestive fantasia in black and grey.

This, at least, was what the young literary world meant by its sudden enthusiasm for the new art. The new art was a convenient way of dealing with our ugly machine-made

world, and poetry began to abound in twilight moods, in Nocturnes and Arrangements—in select parts of the dictionary effectively disposed upon the page. Poetry, too, repudiated the obligation of being anything but beautiful, and in doing so had ceased to deal with the more harsh and uncompromising facts of life.

But this twilight world was, after all, part of the every-day world—a small part of a large world that belonged to everybody. The painters desired a larger world—but a world all their own. And they discovered it by simply opening their eyes.

They discovered that if they painted what they merely saw, they were painting something quite different from what everybody knew was there. Everybody knew that grass is green, and a woman's face pink and white; but the artist saw green shadows on her cheek, and red and yellow flakes of sunlight in the grass. He had only to forget all he knew, and trust to his eyes and his paint brush. . . .

Implicit in this theory of art is, of course, the doctrine that the world as it is lived is meaningless. It is only as its shapes and colors are arranged on canvas, that it has significance. Beauty is not to be sought in the ordinary human meaning of a scene; it is in the effects of color and line purely and simply.

It was thus no longer permissible for the artist to indulge himself quietly in the creation of such effects, for his own satisfaction and that of his fellow-artists, while ostensibly he presents to the multitude a Madonna to arouse their pity or a village beauty to tease their romantic sensibilities; no, the multitude is given "A Woman Washing Her Feet," and they are defied to get any ordinary non-aesthetic emotion out of the spectacle. Or it may be an Old Beggar, but the public is formally warned that he is not there to please anyone's sense of the picturesque, and still less to arouse anybody's pity. The Old Beggar is not to be considered as a human being, but only as a painting. These painters said to the public in effect: Your world means nothing to me; I do not love it, nor hate it, nor wish to alter it: and my world will mean nothing to you if you come to it with emotions of love or hate or hope.

#### Life as Meaningless Accident.

When George Moore came home from France, he brought with him the news of this newest art; and he, among others, commenced to illustrate its principles in literature.

His "Esther Waters" was done under the influence of this theory of art. He was surprised and annoyed—as he confessed in the preface to a revised edition of the novel—that some readers had regarded it as a moral tract against betting on the races. He had not, he protested, intended to reform anybody. He did not, in fact, regard betting from a moral point of view at all. He regarded it from an artistic point of view.

If its consequences were disastrous, that interested him—"amused" him, in the studio sense of the word. In the same way, Esther and her illegitimate child interested him. She "composed" well. And if one pitied her, it was less because of her specific misfortunes than because she was a human being; life in general was, when you came to look at it, a rather pitiful thing. Mr. Moore did not mean that we should pass bills in parliament to relieve such cases. No; he meant to say, "Life is like that." And if you asked, "Do you



mean that life is ugly?"—the reply would be: "Yes, beautifully so!"

We were glad to share Mr. Moore's detached attitude toward human misery. But it was not at all because we were incapable of pity. We could sympathize easily enough; but it hurt too much. To sympathize is to "suffer with." We had to find some way to escape the burden of that suffering. We cherished the airy passage in Mr. Moore's jejune "Confessions of a Young Man," in which he says that it was well worth while for the slaves of Pharaoh to sweat and die under the lash in order that he, young Mr. Moore, might have the pleasure of looking at the pyramids. We tried to feel the same way about it. We did not realize that in so doing we were only making a graceless mockery of our pain. We did not really like the idea of those slaves dying under the lash; and we had been able to justify the ways of Fate to man only by an exaggerated admiration of what, if it had been erected by union labor as a memorial to Mr. Gladstone, we would have perceived to be an uninteresting and inartistic piece of funerary architecture.

But our artistic emotions were all we had as a protection against our human emotions, and they had to serve. Mr. Moore, as he tells us, had been moved to write "Esther Waters" by seeing the slavey in the house where he boarded in London. He had wondered what could justify her squalid existence. And he had had to try to justify it in some way—by turning the ugliness of her real life into the tragic beauty of "Esther Waters." When we, his young disciples, wrote beautifully of horrible things, to the consternation of our elders, we were moved by the same impulse. Curious as it may seem, we were trying to justify the ways of God to man. "It is worth while for them to suffer, in order that I may write a beautiful story" may be construed: "If I write a beautiful story about them, perhaps that will justify their sufferings."

There is implicit here a quasi-mystical identification of artist with subject. I imagine myself to be a poor wretch dying in a slum, and I suffer his pain; I then glorify that pain by the words in which I describe it; and it has been well worth while for me to suffer, in order that I might write. My suffering is transformed into creative joy. The suffering wretch of my imagination is recompensed in full by the pleasures of authorship. But the real man in the slum, with whom I have for a moment identified myself, remains unaffected by my spiritual drama. And hence, because it would hurt too much, because it would be too humiliating to wish to help him and to feel my inability to do so, I—under the tutelage of Mr. Moore—confine my feelings so far as possible to those which I as an artist may feel for the slum-dweller as artistic material. And the result, of course, of my declining to see in him any other significance than what he may have as artistic material, is that I am compelled to refuse to recognize as significant any existence which I myself may have other than as an artist. Except with reference to art, neither he nor I truly exist.

That is what this theory of art comes to—that the actual world is phantasmagoria, and art alone is significant. Reality is illusion, and art the only true reality.

We artists had at last discovered how to face life, and yet evade its human responsibilities. . . .

We cling—it seemed to us—to our little rafts on a dark storm-tossed sea. And we are fortunate in having even so poor and perilous a refuge, for all about us we hear the cries of the drowning. We cannot save them all. At our heroic best, we could help only one or two—and the tragedy of life would still go on. The truth is too pitiful to face. And if we took the ordinary human view of the situation, we would go mad. For we are not, like others, of that callous crowd who can be happy in finding themselves safe, who even rejoice in being able to clamber on some larger raft and shove its occupants off into the darkness. No, because we are artists, and sensitive, we can hear their cries, and feel their anguish, all too well. But we cannot help them. And so we take a detached, artistic, Sophoclean view of the situation. . . .

That girl there—poor, frail thing—we watch her struggles. She is losing hold, and we can foresee the inevitable moment when her hands, blue with cold, will loosen their grasp. For life is like that. Soon or late the hand of fate—yes, she is gone—up-bubbles all her amorous breath, as Keats said. A good phrase! And what better can one do than make phrases—or remember them. . . . Yes. See how the Moon, who is caprice itself, touches with serene and lovely fingertips the white upturned face—what was it *Daudelaire* said? . . .

And why not? If we are truly so helpless, then Art is as good a consolatory religion as any other.

(Continued in September Liberator)



Murvin W. Gilbert

South Chicago.



# REVIEWS

## The Trend of the Times

"Rebellion in the Labor Unions." By Sylvia Kopald. Boni and Liveright, New York.

THAT the alleged labor leaders have long been separated, economically and ideologically, from the membership of the rank and file in the unions, has been patent to anyone with even half-open eyes. To make the rank and file of the unions see this has been quite another matter, and still is. Sylvia Kopald, in "Rebellion in the Labor Unions," gives us a graphic picture of the betrayals by which the membership in the trades and industrial unions in America are coming to recognize their "labor leaders,"—Gompers, Farrington, Lewis, Berry, et al., as "union scabs," as capitalist tools and agents.

Four rank and file revolts are vividly pictured in the book—the Printers' Vacation movement in 1919, the revolt of the Illinois Miners in 1920, the Railroad "outlaw" or "wild-cat" strike in 1920, the New York Web Pressmen's strike in 1923. All these strikes began as struggles for decent wages and working hours and developed into an intense and bitter struggle against the bureaucracy and despotism of the labor misleaders, who on each occasion sold out to the employers, and who invoked governmental pressure—thugs and gunmen—against the insurgent unionists.

The fake labor leaders in the American labor movement demonstrate at every opportunity, in each struggle, that their chief business in life is to crush by any means every attempt of the workers to get better conditions of livelihood, to thrust outside any militancy and class conscious expression in the unions, and, conversely, to give every aid and comfort to the capitalist class. Nor do these capitalist agents in labor's ranks have any misgivings about their actions; material comforts that capitalism affords them, the "honors" accorded them as traitors to the workers by the employers and the government, have salved any conscience they may have had. Class collaboration between the union bureaucrats and the employers and capitalist government has attained maximum efficiency in America.

Repeated and systematic betrayal of the workers by their "leaders" has often brought down the wrath of the rank and file of the unions on the heads of their traitorous officialdom. But this wrath and insurgency has, for the most part, been unorganized; it has not had a solid program to meet the problems arising in the unions except the easiest, but poorest way, out of the trouble,—that is, to get mad and leave the unions even more completely in the control of the labor fakers. Dual unionism, the patent medicine against union ills, whether ills of wages or ills of leadership, has been found to be, not a cure, but a disease. In the recognition of this fact lies the hope of the rejuvenation of the American labor unions into fighting class bodies, into revolutionary labor unions.

Internationally, the Red International of Labor Unions, and in America, the Trade Union Educational League, have evolved the slogans: Into the Unions! Win the rank and file to the class program, whether it be for amalgamation of the existing unions, the Labor Party, or the Soviet Revolution. Win the membership for a militant program and then for the

Revolution itself. The program of the Trade Union Educational League meets opposition and suppression from the labor fakers, but success among the rank and file.

The spontaneous and angry revolts brilliantly pictured by Miss Kopald mean much indeed, but even more significant is the conscious and organized militancy within the unions. One is the road to despair and desperation; the other is the road to power by the workers over the prostrate bodies of labor misleaders and their aids, the employers and the capitalist government. Miss Kopald's book is informative, both for sources and day to day fighting material, and it is inspiring. It should circulate well among thinking workers.

Yes, "Trades unionists are long suffering people indeed." But their patience is passing, and thereby comes the beginning of the passing of their suffering. Militant organization within the unions is producing good effects for the rank and file and acute indigestion for Gompers, Lewis, Berry and the rest of the offal. "The fight within the unions is on, whether in terms of amalgamation, industrial unionism or what not. Behind the conservatives is the power of the official machine. Behind the radicals is the trend of the times."

The author writes, of course, from the typical "impartial" intellectualist point of view, and while it should be clearly understood that the book is not written by a communist or from a communist viewpoint, it certainly is a welcome addition to the sparse literature on such a vitally important subject as left wing unionism in America.

Martin Abern.

## Once Over

"All God's Chillun Got Wings." By Eugene O'Neil. Boni & Liveright, New York.

A WITLESS, bitterly-prejudiced white girl marries in her utter need a supersensitive Negro. Her "pride" then leads her to despise her husband and to rejoice, when he fails because of his paralyzing consciousness of race hate. At the last she goes crazy and he resolves to nurse and care for her forever.

The play is a good study of a tender, sensitive nature chained to one that is hateful and unbalanced. Unfortunately it has become a bone of contention. The white morons denounce it because it deals with miscegenation. The black morons (the race aristocrats) denounce it, because it shows a Negro marrying a girl who is no longer a virgin. Horrible! The liberal imbeciles (New Republic and American Mercury) defend it as a splendid presentation of the moral ruin caused by cross-mating. If an intelligent man or woman, white or black, marries a fool, a hateful fool, there will be a tragedy, but what has color to do with it? Geo. McLaughlin.

"The Last of the Heretics." By Algernon Sydney Crapsey. A. A. Knopf, New York.

THIS autobiography is the story of a Christian squirt gun filled with the milk of human kindness which was successively trained against slavery during the Civil War, against fundamentalism in religion, and finally against greed and inhumanity as manifested in the capitalist system.

Crapsey was a minister who, in 1906, was unfrocked by the Protestant Episcopal Church for heresy. When Bishop Brown was tried for heresy a month ago he was said to have been the first person tried for heresy in this country. Everybody had forgotten Crapsey, such is fame. Karl Pretshold.



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