
THE TRADE UNIONS AND THE WAR

BY WILLIAM Z. FOSTER

FOR the second time within one generation, the great bankers, industrialists and landowners have plunged humanity into a devastating world war. These capitalist exploiters, who dominate every great government except that of the Soviet Union, are criminally responsible for the brutal slaughter, and their cold-blooded aim is to redivide the world among themselves for their own profit.

Eager for their share of the war loot, the Wall Street imperialists, who control the United States Government, the two major parties, the press, the radio, and the other chief means of shaping public opinion, are working feverishly to force this country into the war. Day by day, they are deliberately bringing us closer to the precipice. The overwhelming majority of the people of the United States, like the masses of all other lands, want peace and are opposed to the war. But unless they can find a way, swiftly and effectively, to make their will prevail this country will be soon plunged into the conflict by the Roosevelt Government, aided by the Republicans.

Organized Labor's Responsibility in the War

The workers must necessarily give the peace-loving masses of the people leadership in their fight for peace. This means that, inasmuch as in the United States neither the Communist Party nor Farmer-Labor Party is strong enough to secure the allegiance of the decisive sections of the working class, the chief burden of mass leadership in this crisis devolves upon the trade unions. Their armies of members have gigantic potential strength; they occupy key positions in industry and politics; the farmers, professionals and other democratic elements would follow their militant peace lead. No American Government could force the country into war in face of the opposition of a great and determined people's peace movement headed by the trade unions. In this critical moment of history, therefore, the trade unions bear the great responsibility of leading the fight of the masses to keep the United States out of the war, to help establish a democratic peace, and so to reorganize society, on socialist foundations, as to make forever impossible a recurrence of such war slaughter.

During the first World War the trade unions of the United States and Europe bore a similar responsibility. But they failed to live up to it. Instead they followed the capitalists rights into the war. This was because the unions were dominated by Social-Democratic and Gompersite leaders who were tools of the war-making imperialists. Only in Russia did the trade unions, led politically by the Bolshheviks, increasingly fight against the war and help put an end to the capitalist system responsible for it.

During the present war the American trade unions must not fail in their fundamental responsibility to combat the war. They must not allow the employers, capitalist politicians and reactionary union leaders to drag the United States into the conflict. With the masses of the people behind them, they can put a halt to the whole murderous business of getting this country into the insane slaughter. They can become a powerful force for world peace. Should the unions fail in this historic task, the American people will pay for it in blood and tears. And, after the war, the unions will face a life-and-death struggle for existence. For in this war the employers of the world, those of the United States included, besides butchering countless thousands of toilers, are aiming at setting up a system of fascist tyranny and exploitation such as mankind has never before experienced.

The toiling masses in this country are much better able to fight against the warmongers now than they were a generation ago. They realize

the futility of the 1917 war "to make the world safe for democracy," and they have come to see through the demagogic tricks that were used to plunge the United States into that war. Moreover, the trade union movement is much larger and politically more mature. Its membership has increased from 2,500,000 in 1917 to 9,000,000 in 1940; it has registered significant victories, and its leadership, at least in the C.I.O., has become more progressive. And, lastly, today the workers have a strong Communist Party politically to lead their fight, instead of the flabby and opportunistic Socialist Party of the first World War period.

During this first year of the present war the trade unions, in spite of many shortcomings in the leadership, have waged a more effective struggle to keep America out of the bloodbath than they did prior to the World War. Many unions, both in the A. F. of L. and the C.I.O., have spoken out categorically against American war participation. They have also vigorously condemned conscription. But the unions are still falling very short of fulfilling the peace tasks thrust upon them by history. Consequently the warmongers are rapidly pushing this country into the war maelstrom. Only a portion of the trade union leadership—the Lewis group in the C.I.O. and Whitney among the railroad unions—is waging a struggle to halt America's entry into the war, whereas the most powerful sections of the trade union leadership—the A. F. of L. officials, the Railroad Brotherhood

chiefs, and the strong Hillman group in the C.I.O., officially controlling at least 75 per cent of all trade unions—are following an orientation which leads to war as surely as Gompers' policy did during the last great war.

The fight of organized labor against the war needs to be vastly intensified. The pro-war policy of the Green-Hillman leaders must be offset by rank-and-file anti-war pressure, and the policy of the Lewis group must be clarified and strengthened. The purpose of this article is to indicate the principal respects in which the peace policy of the trade unions needs improvement.

The War's Origin and Objectives

The first consideration for an effective anti-war policy is to understand the basic causes of the present war and the war aims of the various powers. This war, like that of 1914-18 of which it is the continuation, originates in the very nature of the capitalist system. It is the inevitable result of the private ownership of the industries and the land, with the consequent ever-sharpening struggle between rival capitalist nations for new markets, fresh sources of raw materials, additional territories, and more masses of cheap labor to exploit. It is an unjust war, an imperialist war, a brutal struggle among the capitalist states to re-divide the earth for their own profit. All the capitalist powers, including the United States, are guilty of causing the war. The recurrent world wars, together with

the ever-deepening economic crisis, growth of mass unemployment, and upspringing of fascism, are basic indications that the world capitalist system, now in its period of monopoly and imperialism, has lost its expansive power, and is in decay and in the grip of general crisis.

The top leadership of the American trade union movement fail to realize these basic causes of the war. Open defenders of capitalism, they do not understand the war as an expression of the deepest workings of the capitalist system and of the decay of that system. Instead, they satisfy themselves with various false explanations for the war set afloat by the capitalist forces themselves. Consequently their policy towards the war cannot have a sound basis. They are bound to go trailing after the capitalists into the war, and that is precisely what they are doing.

Not understanding the basic causes of the war, the trade union leaders also do not comprehend the true objectives of the struggling capitalist powers. Instead, they fit themselves into the war aims of the ruling imperialist bourgeoisie and re-echo its demagogic slogans among the workers. Thus when the A. F. of L. heads, the Hillman group in the C.I.O. and the railroad union leaders declare that Great Britain is fighting for democracy and that we should give it "all possible aid short of war," they are simply voicing the war program of American imperialism. The truth is that England is not fighting for democracy, nor will the United States do so if it enters the war.

Both powers are seeking imperialist domination of the world, and regardless of which side should win the war would surely try to establish fascism as widely as possible, in an effort to hold the decaying capitalist system together. A. F. of L. and other trade union leaders who accept Great Britain's cause as a fight for democracy are, notwithstanding their pacifist declarations, giving American imperialism a green light to go to war whenever it sees fit to do so. They are repeating Gompers' 1917 betrayal of the workers.

John L. Lewis, in classing the war as a "barbaric orgy of conquest and aggression" and in declaring that "Labor wants no war nor any part of it" (C.I.O. San Francisco convention), has taken the most advanced stand of any decisive American trade union official regarding the war and has stimulated the anti-war movement. But grave weaknesses in his position are his failures to work out a clear statement of the real causes of the war and to develop an active campaign to liquidate the widespread and dangerous illusions among the masses to the effect that Great Britain, and its non-belligerent ally, the United States, are defending world democracy. These errors, if uncorrected, can lead to disaster for the peace struggle of the masses. The outstanding need of the American trade union movement, therefore, is a clear-cut analysis of the war and its objectives. Such an analysis, in its basic content, can only be found in the principles of Marxism-Leninism.

*"National Defense" and
"National Unity"*

When the Wall Street capitalists forced the United States into the last great war they did it under slogans of "national defense" and "national unity." With the pretext of "national defense" they deliberately took step after step into the war, and, with the deceptive cry of "national unity," they subordinated the labor movement to the domination of the warlike capitalist government. They are now trying to repeat this process.

The means being employed by Wall Street to drag the United States into the present war are strikingly similar to those used to involve us in the first World War. Now, as then, there is a "liberal" government in power, and under hypocritical protestations of neutrality it is taking one warlike step after another. In 1940, as in 1916, a national election is being fought out around innocent-sounding pacifist slogans, while both parties are obviously determined to take us into the war after the elections, if not before. In 1917, the war-makers set up the Council of National Defense, dominated by Big Business men, to organize their saturnalia of profiteering, and now they have established its successor, the National Advisory Defense Commission, with such men as Knudsen of General Motors and Stettinius of U. S. Steel, controlling it. In 1917, too, they had an Advisory Commission of the National Defense Council, with Samuel Gompers heading it, for the purpose of par-

alyzing the workers' opposition to the war; and now, with the same reactionary objective, they have launched the Labor Policy Advisory Committee, led by the Social-Democrat, Sidney Hillman.

Obviously a first condition for the trade unions in order to defeat this deliberate attempt to get them behind the war that Wall Street is organizing is to expose the whole "national defense" and "national unity" demagoguery of the Roosevelt Administration and of the capitalists generally. The widespread confusion among the masses on these two issues make such an exposure imperatively necessary. Labor should stand on the ground that our present Government is aggressive, imperialist, and that, regardless of the huge armaments it may build up, it cannot and will not defend the peace and democracy of the American people, but will sacrifice them. The trade unions should counterpose to the imperialists' false slogans of "national defense" and "national unity" the workers' slogan of a democratic people's government as the only true means for genuine national unity and national defense. Organized labor should lend no official sanction to the present war preparations, misnamed the national defense program, nor should it participate in such labor traps as Hillman's Labor Policy Advisory Commission.

Unfortunately, however, the most decisive sections of the trade union leadership—A. F. of L., Railroad Brotherhoods, and the Hillman wing of the C.I.O.—are swallowing whole the "national defense," "national

unity" hypocrisy of the capitalists. They are blessing the warlike policy of the government as neutral and self-defensive; they are propagandizing the workers, in labor phrases, with every war slogan of the bourgeoisie; they are supporting all steps being taken by the Government towards war; they have linked up their unions with the Government's war boards. In short, they are attempting to chain the trade union movement to American imperialism's war juggernaut, even as Gompers did in 1917.

The strong isolationist trend of the Lewis leadership in the C.I.O., and to some extent that of President Whitney in the Railroad Trainmen, has tended to slow up the Government's aggressive war policy. These forces have made it more difficult for the Government to move towards war in its foreign policy and also for the capitalists to force through their ruthless policy of lowering working class living, working and civic standards in this country. Basic errors in Lewis' and Whitney's position, however, are that these leaders have not exposed the imperialist and aggressive character of the Government's so-called program of national defense and its tricky "national unity" war labor boards, the only purposes of which are to reduce the workers' standards and to defeat their demand for peace.

Labor's Attitude Towards Roosevelt's Foreign Policy

The Roosevelt Administration has been increasingly following a for-

eign policy, dictated by the interests of American imperialism, which contributed greatly to the outbreak of the war and which is daily dragging this country closer to the war abyss. Among the major aspects of this warlike foreign policy were (a) the refusal to support the Soviet Union's proposal for an international peace front with the bourgeois-democratic countries, which would have stopped the fascist aggressors and prevented the war; (b) the betrayal of Republican Spain by placing the arms embargo against it, thereby, in collusion with Chamberlain and Blum, dealing European democracy a deadly blow and giving Hitler and Mussolini a decisive victory; (c) the sending of munitions to Japan, wherewith to make war against the Chinese people; (d) the attempt, in the Finnish situation, to transform the present war into a general capitalist war against the U.S.S.R.; (e) the inauguration of the drive for military domination of the whole Western Hemisphere, from Hudson Bay to Cape Horn; (f) the adoption of the unneutral policy of giving "all aid short of war to Great Britain," including lifting the arms embargo, then sending of secret war planes, the allocation of the fifty destroyers, and the war pact with Canada.

Against this program of imperialist aggression and conquest the leaders of the trade unions have failed to react in a manner to safeguard the peace and welfare of the working class and the American people generally. As for the A. F. of L. top officialdom, as usual,

with the accompaniment of pacifist phrases, it has fitted its policies right in with those of the warlike imperialist capitalists. It scorned the international peace front; condemned the Spanish Republican cause, took no steps in defense of the Chinese people; carried on a violent campaign of incitement against the Soviet Union during the Finnish war and at all other times; blessed the Administration's imperialistic "hemisphere defense" program, and gave its full support to Roosevelt's warlike policy of aiding British imperialism. The Greens, Hutchesons and Wolls in the A. F. of L. and the Hillman forces in the C.I.O., have concurred in the whole foreign policy of American imperialism, a policy which is largely responsible for the present war and for our threatened involvement in it.

In general, the attitude of the C.I.O. leader, John L. Lewis, towards the war and the Government's foreign policy is isolationist: that America should keep its hands out of Europe's quarrels. Time and again he has warned that sinister forces are trying to involve the United States in the war, and he has insisted that our great task is to defend democracy in this country. Lewis, however, has not opposed the Administration's foreign policy concretely — regarding the peace front, Spain, the Soviet Union, Finland, Japan and Great Britain; and he has not proposed alternative constructive peace policies in any of these instances. Thus, Lewis did not attack the Government's outrageous betrayal of Re-

publican Spain, nor did he support the Spanish Loyalists. Similarly with regard to China, the Soviet Union, England, etc., he took no definite and determined peace stand. The one outstanding exception was in the case of Latin America, where Lewis gave powerful support to the democratic forces. By his vigorous general opposition to American involvement in the war, and especially his fight against conscription, undoubtedly Lewis has done much to encourage the peace forces of this country. But his isolationism, with its lack of a positive democratic foreign policy, is inadequate to serve as the basis for a strong peace movement capable of resisting the Government's warlike foreign policy, point by point.

An imperative need of the American trade union movement is a peace policy of proletarian internationalism. This should be based upon active collaboration with the democratic and revolutionary peoples of the Soviet Union, China, India and Latin America, with the oppressed minorities and vanquished nations, with the labor movement of the world—against all the imperialist war-makers, including those of the United States and Great Britain, as well as of Germany, Italy and Japan. Green's and Hillman's line of supporting the Roosevelt Administration's foreign policy is a straight road to war, and Lewis' general isolationism, if not reshaped into a positive peace program, can result in eventual collapse before the drive of the militant war-makers.

The Question of the Workers' Economic Standards

The domestic side of the imperialists' war program is to reap enormous profits for themselves at the expense of the living standards of the toiling masses, even as they did in the first World War, when eighteen thousand new millionaires were created. The corporations are now sabotaging arms production until their outrageous terms are accepted. Their present growing success in this organized robbery may be indicated by a few figures. The profits of General Motors have jumped up from \$16,370,192 in the first six months of 1939 to \$25,871,572 in the corresponding period in 1940, and those of U. S. Steel from \$1,970,312 to \$36,315,003. During the same period 95 leading manufacturing concerns stepped up their profits by 317 per cent. The profiteering hold-up in arms contracts is further illustrated by a recent arrangement between the Government and the Chrysler Motor Corporation for 5,000 tanks, in which, besides paying the company an exorbitant price, the Government built a \$20,000,000 plant which it is renting to Chrysler for one dollar a year. The Packard Company secured from the Administration an even more advantageous contract. It gets, in addition to \$3,333 each for 9,000 airplane motors, the sole ownership of a \$30,000,000 plant which was entirely paid for by the Government. And so it goes all along the line with the employers also demanding tax-free surplus profits and similar advantages. Sid-

ney Hillman, however, assures us (PM, Sept. 4), that "industry's lack of patriotism is exaggerated." While the employers, with the help of the Government, are thus plunging into an orgy of profiteering, they are at the same time working on a program of reducing the people's living standards. By distorting the experience of France, they are erecting into a sort of sacred capitalist principle their insistence that the toiling masses must be impoverished and the wealthy still further enriched if the country is to be defended. All their agents and mouthpieces are shouting that the workers must accept heavier burdens. In fact, while the employers are reaping their added millions, the workers' real wages have stood still. Both President Roosevelt and candidate Willkie, while demagogically asserting, for election purposes, that they will protect the workers' standards, are significantly warning the masses that they must be prepared to make sacrifices. The employers' program, which is being pushed on all fronts, is to reduce the workers' living and working conditions by weakening the trade unions, by raising living costs, by breaking down union shop regulations, by increasing hours, by the speed-up, by slashing work-relief, by curtailing social security and emasculating other labor legislation, by shifting the tax rate against the poorer strata, by enforced "loans" from the workers according to the Keynes Plan, and by various other robbery devices designed to throw the financial burden of the "defense" program upon the workers.

In this situation it is of the most vital importance that the unions militantly defend the workers' economic interests. The working masses are increasingly in a militant mood. But the top A. F. of L. leaders have accepted in practice, as well as in theory, the capitalist idea that the workers must make sacrifices for "national defense" and they are playing down all militancy among the workers, as the heavy decline in strike activity in 1940, as compared with 1939, shows. William Green, to offset the increasing mass pressure of the workers, is making a clamor to the effect that labor standards must not be reduced; but his real line was exposed by his statement in the *American Federationist* for July, 1940, that "Our members will work ten, twelve and sixteen hours a day and be glad to do it, whenever an emergency involving the safety of the nation requires it." In *The New York Times* of August 20, Green also was cited in favor of industrial conscription as follows: "We are not opposed to compulsory industrial service, registration and training, if that becomes necessary to protect our lives and our homeland."

The A. F. of L. leader say, "Don't strike, leave it to the Government to protect us." Dan Tobin, head of the powerful Teamsters Union, is quoted approvingly to this effect by the September *American Federationist*. Mr. Tobin, and his A. F. of L. co-leaders, want us to believe that "concerns that deprive the workers of their rights in any way will undoubtedly be taken in

charge by these [governmental] authorities." This, in spite of the present unrebuked debauch of arms profiteering and encroachment upon the workers' conditions. We may be sure that if Green, Woll, Hutcheson and Tobin have their way the workers will be tied up with no-strike, no-wage-advance, no-organize restrictions as they were by Gompers during the first World War.

Sidney Hillman with his Labor Policy Advisory Committee, made up of Administration-selected representatives of the A. F. of L., C.I.O. and Railroad Brotherhoods, is following this same employer-Government line of forcing the workers to accept "sacrifices," of leashing the working class to the chariot of American imperialism. Hillman is using his influence everywhere, especially in the C.I.O. unions (Steel, Auto, Mine, Textile, Rubber, Clothing, etc.), to kill the fighting spirit of the workers, to dampen their wage movements and to halt their organizing drives. With sinister significance he "assured" the workers (*PM*, Sept. 4), that labor has not yielded up the right to strike, "it has merely abandoned the privilege of striking." Characteristically, also, the first statement of Hillman's Labor Policy Advisory Committee, on July 12, accepted *unconditionally* the Government's so-called defense program and made no demands whatever to check the war profiteers or to protect the conditions of the workers. And in the August 31 statement of the National Defense Advisory Committee, in which Hillman is

the hand-picked labor representative, it is stated that: "All work carried on as part of the Defense Program should comply with Federal statutory provisions affecting labor." Note: he does not say *must*, but merely an evasive *should*. This is an invitation to the employers to violate labor's legislative protection. The Social-Democrats are the most outspoken warmongers in the labor movement. President Roosevelt, in selecting one of this tendency, Sidney Hillman, to head the Labor Policy Advisory Commission, got a reliable war agent.

It is to the great credit of John L. Lewis, and the strong group of C.I.O. leaders behind him, that while the A. F. of L., Railroad Brotherhood, and Hillman C.I.O. forces have accepted the imperialists' "sacrific and no-strike" policy, the Lewis leaders have developed a militant campaign in defense of the workers' economic standards. This is the very strongest point in their present war-time program, and its vital significance cannot be overestimated. Lewis has taken a bold stand against profiteering in all its forms, for the strictest application and the strengthening of the Wagner Act, Walsh-Healey Act, Wages-and-Hours Act, and all other important social legislation. He is pushing for a determined defense of wage rates, for the continuation of work relief on a larger scale, for better hours and working conditions, and for the organization of the millions of unorganized. Lewis is not fooled by the employers' cry that the war will do away with unemployment,

but is insisting correctly that this remains the nation's number one economic problem. Lewis' militant position on the defense of the workers' economic standards has been a thorn in the side of the employers, the Government and their Green-Hillman adjutants.

The fight for the economic interests of the workers and other toiling masses, for their right to strike, is of basic importance in this critical period. Not only because the organizations, legislation and living standards of the masses urgently need this defense, but also because this elementary fight is the very beginning and foundation of the struggle to keep America out of the war and to defend its democracy. The fight for the workers' economic interests should be conducted, not on the basis of the workers accepting "sacrifices," and not in defense of the status quo, but distinctly with the objective of improving the living and working conditions of the masses all along the line.

Assuming that the Government goes through with its stupendous militarization program, misnamed "national defense," the country, with its 11,000,000 unemployed, would still possess sufficient reserves of labor power to provide for substantial improvement in mass living standards. The militarization program will absorb only a minority of these millions of jobless, even if the country should go to war. (England, at war, still has a big unemployment problem.) The remaining workers will serve as a great reservoir of labor able to

provide for shortening hours, improving wages, and better social security provisions. But the workers will have to fight militantly to achieve these betterments. During the last war the eight-hour day was established in the railroad, lumber, packing, steel and many other industries; in this war the six-hour day must be instituted widely, as a measure to give work to millions of unemployed.

The question of organizing the unorganized also now takes on greatly increased importance. While this war is going on several million workers should be organized into the trade unions. A good start toward this end would be the organization of the Ford plant, which would stimulate unionization work in every industry in the country.

The Defense of the People's Civil Liberties

A dangerous phase of the imperialists' war policy is to strip the workers and other toilers of their democratic rights in order to break down the will for peace of the masses. This explains the increasing attacks upon the Bill of Rights, including alien registration, the anti-trust prosecutions of the trade unions, the growth of vigilanteism, the attempts to outlaw the Communist Party, the moves, under the guise of conscription, to regiment the whole American people, the preparation of the infamous M-Day Plan and a great deal more of a similar reactionary character. During the last war period there was also much legisla-

tion of this nature, but this time it is infinitely more widespread, vicious and sinister; all of which is an indication that the great American capitalists, like their confrères in Europe, are definitely heading towards fascism.

Consequently, a major task of the workers, in their struggle against America's involvement in the war and against reaction generally, is the fight to defend their civil liberties. Here again, however, they have been grossly betrayed by many of their most powerful trade union leaders. The A. F. of L. and Railroad Brotherhood officialdom (always excepting Whitney, of the Trainmen, who is following a line similar to John L. Lewis') are tailing along after the employers and the Government in their dangerous trend towards the eventual establishment of fascism in this country through the suppression of civil liberties.

These reactionary union leaders have given strong support to the infamous Dies Committee and its "fifth column" demagoguery; they joined hands with the employers in attacking the Wagner Act; they want to drive the Communists out of the unions and to legalize the Communist Party; they are making no fight against the impending M-Day plan regimentation; they made no protest against Roosevelt's dangerously dictatorial act of transferring the destroyers to England. Their opposition to conscription was purely formal, forced by the mass pressure of their membership. The very worst of these red-baiting, warmongering misleaders of labor

are the Social-Democrats, such as Dubinsky of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. It is typical of this breed that Sidney Hillman never spoke a word against conscription, although the A. F. of L., the C.I.O. and the Railroad Brotherhoods had all officially condemned the infamous Burke-Wadsworth Bill.

In this most vital matter John L. Lewis is correct in that he has taken a determined stand against the dangerous attacks now being made upon the Bill of Rights. Declaring that the rights of labor are more in jeopardy now "than at any time in the history of the modern labor movement," Lewis has waged a militant fight against conscription, against the reactionaries' attempts to emasculate existing labor legislation and to limit trade union rights, against the infamous proceedings of the Dies Committee, and against the poll tax and other restrictions upon the voting rights of Negroes and poor whites. The greatest weakness in Lewis' fight for the preservation of civil liberties, however, is that he has not combated the current attempts to outlaw the Communist Party. Although he refuses to join in the scandalous red-baiting by the reactionaries, he has not understood the basic fact that the Communist Party is the first line trench of American democracy and that unless its legal rights are defended the whole structure of our civil liberties is imperilled. In Italy, Germany and France the first big step of the reactionaries towards fascism was to outlaw the Communist Party,

and when this was accomplished the rest of the fascist program soon followed. It is just this course that the reactionaries in this country have in mind with their vicious attacks upon the Communist Party—the outrageous conviction of Earl Browder and other Party leaders, the denial of election rights to the Party, etc. The defense of the legal existence of the Communist Party is the bounden task of the trade unions and other democratic organizations as a major, if not the decisive, phase of their own fight for the right to live and function. They could learn a most valuable lesson from the fight of the Radicals, Socialists and trade unionists of Chile against the attempts of the fascists in that country to outlaw the Communist Party.

The Question of a Third Party

The war situation emphasizes in sharpest form the imperative need of the workers, farmers, professionals and other democratic elements of the people to organize a great new, third party. The Democratic Party has abandoned even the mild reforms of the New Deal and it has agreed with the Republican Party upon a program of reaction and war. Roosevelt and Willkie are at one regarding every major question confronting the country, both domestic or foreign. They support the policy of all aid to Great Britain; they are agreed upon American imperialism's militant policy in the Far East and its drive to dominate Latin America; they endorse conscription and the

gigantic so-called "national defense" program; they are also both of the determination that the workers must make sacrifices. Both would "appease" Hitler or make war upon him, as the interests of Wall Street dictate. Either Willkie or Roosevelt would, if elected, head as fast as possible towards developing the dictatorship that the big capitalists have in mind for this country. The election program of the Communist Party correctly states:

"The Democratic Party is the party of the Roosevelts and Dies, of the Garners and Woodrums, of the du Ponts and Cromwells, of the Boss Hagues and Kelleys, of Tammany and the K.K.K. It is the party of 'liberal' promises and reactionary deeds.

"The Republican Party is the party of the Willkies and Hoovers, of the Vandenberg and Fords, of the Insulls, Weirs and Girdlers. It is the party of the Associated Farmers and the open shoppers.

"The Morgans, Rockefellers and du Ponts are the Interlocking Directorate and Holding Company of both the Democratic and Republican parties. That is why both parties are war parties, M-Day parties, parties of imperialism, reaction and hunger." (*Election Platform of the Communist Party, 1940*, p. 13.)

The formation of a great third party is fast becoming a life-and-death question for the American trade union movement. Such a party is vitally necessary in order to fight for peace, to defend the workers' living and working stan-

dards, and their civil rights. Especially is this true since the adoption of conscription. The new party must be a people's party, representing all the toilers, dedicated to the struggle against the war-makers and imperialists, and aiming at a far-reaching democratization of American life.

There is now a sufficiently broad political mass basis for the successful launching of such a great party. This is seen from the facts that the overwhelming majority of the people want peace, whereas the two big parties are for war; the people want to better their economic standards, whereas the Republican and Democratic parties aim to reduce them; the people want to preserve their civil liberties, whereas both Democrats and Republicans are heading towards a fascist dictatorship. Never were the masses so sharply in conflict with the political policies of the two capitalist parties. In this election huge numbers, who will vote for Roosevelt as a "lesser evil," would vote for a broad Farmer-Labor Party were there one in the field. The 9,000,000 trade union members could furnish a solid organizational foundation for the new party of peace, jobs and democracy.

Although the workers are developing politically very fast, large numbers are still afflicted with many serious illusions, which help to hold them back from independent political action—including a waning belief in Roosevelt, the misconception that Great Britain is fighting for democracy and that we should help her, confusion about

what constitutes "national unity" and "national defense," and a hesitancy to break with long-time political connections. But the greatest stumbling block to the formation of a great party of toilers is the conservative policy of the A. F. of L. and Railroad Brotherhoods leadership, together with the Social-Democrats of the Hillman-Dubinsky type. These people, in the malodorous tradition of Gompers, are the inveterate enemies of the Farmer-Labor Party movement. They are striving to keep the working class under the domination of both old capitalist parties. Thus, in the A. F. of L. Executive Council we see the criminally ridiculous spectacle of the Green-Tobin group supporting Roosevelt, while the Woll-Hutcheson clique endorses Willkie.

The C.I.O., especially John L. Lewis, has done invaluable work in educating the masses on the need for independent political action. The formation of Labor's Non-Partisan League was a long step in the right direction. So also was Lewis' establishment of closer political working relations with various farmers' organizations, the American Youth Congress, the National Negro Congress, the Townsend pension movement, the peace organizations, and other mass groupings. But, as Gene Dennis points out in his article on this general subject in the September issue of *The Communist*, many progressive leaders have been slow and hesitant in moving towards the formation of the third party.

During the present election cam-

paign the basis should definitely be laid for a broad people's political coalition. The fight for the Communist candidates, Browder and Ford, the broad political discussion in all toilers' organizations, the support of genuinely anti-war candidates—should be followed up by a gathering together of all these democratic forces into a united political movement. The drive towards war by the two old parties and their increasing attacks upon the living standards and civil liberties of the American people make the early formation of a powerful new party of the toiling masses imperative.

Trade Unionism and Socialism

For the American trade union movement the question of socialism is also raised fundamentally by the present war. The capitalist system, which is in its final stage, that of monopoly and imperialism, is engulfed in an incurable general crisis. It is breaking down, rotting at the heart. Just as feudalism had to give way to a higher social system, capitalism, so now this capitalist system, having outlived its constructive historical role, will have to make place for the next great advance of humanity, to socialism. The two world wars within one generation, the deepening industrial paralysis, the decay of bourgeois democracy, the rise of fascism, the growth of political revolt in many countries, are all basic indications of the fundamental decay of capitalism as a world system.

The first World War dealt an irreparable blow to the capitalist system as a whole. Besides causing an economic ruin that has never been overcome, it also resulted in the birth of socialism in the Soviet Union, covering one-sixth of the earth's land surface. In the present war the imperialists are unwittingly delivering still heavier smashes at their doomed social order. This is all the more significant because capitalism as a system is much weaker economically and politically now than it was during the early stages of the first World War. And also because the anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist forces—the great Soviet Union, the vast colonial liberation movements in China, India, and Latin America, the oppressed national minorities and vanquished peoples, the awakening workers and peasants in various countries—are far more powerful than they were then. Consequently, the capitalist system is at present much less able to stand the shock of war and revolution than it was a generation ago.

The great capitalists of the world are well aware of the danger into which their social system is now sinking and they are filled with a growing fear of socialist revolution. Consequently, they are everywhere moving in the direction of fascist terrorism, hoping by this means to maintain their obsolete social order in operation. This trend applies to the United States as well as to all other big capitalist countries. Wall Street is the home of the fifth column and the mainspring of fascist agitation in this country. Roosevelt

has succumbed to this general reactionary trend. He has definitely abandoned the New Deal reforms, and has turned to the fatal course of militant imperialism, reactionary dictatorship and war, in his effort to keep capitalism going.

The American working class must come to understand the above outlined basic developments—the breakdown of capitalism and the growth of the forces making for socialism. Otherwise it cannot effectively defend even its most elementary interests, but will be betrayed by the capitalists into the swamp of tyranny, poverty and war, which is the only prospect before the people so long as capitalism lasts. The workers' leaders must realize, while they are fighting for every possible easement under capitalism—better economic conditions, stronger organization, greater democracy—that the deepening difficulties of the masses can never be basically solved until the workers strike at the fundamental root of the whole evil of present-day society by abolishing private ownership in the industries and the land, by making these social necessities the property of the whole people, by establishing a government of workers and farmers.

Socialism offers the only road for humanity to peace, prosperity and freedom. This is shown conclusively by the Soviet Union which, with its socialist system, has abolished industrial crises and unemployment and developed an expanding industry and agriculture, with constantly improving mass standards of living, culture and freedom. The

American trade unions imperatively require a class-conscious leadership. They must have at their head not antedeluvian Gompersites of the Green-Woll school, nor dangerously opportunistic Social-Democrats à la Hillman-Dubinsky, but militant progressive leaders who have some understanding of the fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism; men and women who know what is actually happening in this harassed world and what must be done about it.

In Conclusion

In addition to the foregoing outlined needs for the trade unions in order to defeat the warmongers: namely, a clearer understanding of the causes and objectives of the war, a program of genuine national defense and national unity, a vigorous fight to protect and improve the workers' economic standards, a powerful defense of the Bill of Rights against the fascist-minded employers, a consolidation of the peace forces in a great third party of toilers, and a new type of class-conscious leadership—there are also a number of other considerations to bear in mind.

The first of these is that the more the Green-Hillman leaders develop the Government's pro-war policies among the workers, the more this will widen the gap between these leaders and the rank and file of the unions. Thus it is becoming more and more necessary for the masses of trade union members, who are eager to stay out of the war and to defend their stan-

dards and liberties, to exercise their democratic rights in the unions. Trade union democracy now becomes of paramount importance. During the first World War, when the leaders grossly betrayed the rank and file, and when the gap between the two was wide and deep, the workers often were compelled to take the defense of their interests into their own hands. Hence there were the many rank-and-file wage movements, organizing campaigns, and strikes in that period. That the membership below is already beginning to move in the present war crisis is shown by the significant trade union representation at the recent Emergency Peace Mobilization in Chicago, by the widespread cropping up of unofficial strike movements, and by many other rank-and-file developments.

Another vital need created by the present situation is for rank-and-file education on the complicated issues raised by the war. While the serious menace presented by the pro-war attitude of the powerful trade union leaders must always be kept clearly in mind, there must nevertheless be no overlooking of the danger contained in the many illusions and confusions prevailing among the workers themselves. As Lenin said (*Left Wing Communism*, page 4) "We must not regard that which is obsolete for us as obsolete for the class, as obsolete for the masses." Despite their enormous political advances in recent years, many millions of workers have illusions that British imperialism is fighting for democracy and that

Roosevelt is a progressive. They are likewise confused regarding the questions of national defense and national unity. Also the great majority of them have not yet come to understand even the first elements of socialism. Only by recognizing and overcoming these deterrent factors among the workers, only by systematic educational work, can the power of the warmongering reactionaries be broken in the ranks of the unions.

Still another basic consequence to be borne in mind in the present critical period is the urgent need for trade union unity. Although organic unity of the three big divisions of the trade union movement may not be immediately at hand, nevertheless, practical cooperation between labor's split forces, in the fight against American involvement in the war, is possible. It is noteworthy that when the Government and the employers wanted the trade union officials to come together in support of their gigantic militarization and war program they had not the slightest difficulty in accomplishing this through Hillman's Labor Policy Advisory Commission. Why, then, cannot the A. F. of L., the C.I.O., and the Railroad Brotherhoods, especially in their lower ranks, cooperate in defense of the workers' common interests? Many current instances of such cooperation show that this can be done on a general scale.

This joint fight against American entry into the war, for the defense of the workers' living standards and civil liberties and for the formation of a great Farmer-Labor party,

should provide the basis for an early organic unity of the whole American trade union movement.

Lastly, there is the heavy emphasis which the war places upon the role of the Communist Party. In this crisis, when the capitalists are deluging the world with blood and trying to set up the most deadly regimes of terrorism and demagogy, it is the great task of our Party to stand forth boldly, braving all persecutions and explaining to the workers the basic meaning of the course of events. It is to the Communist Party above all that the masses must look for a true analysis of the domestic and world situations

and for a clear lead in their struggles to defend themselves from the predatory, fascist-minded, war-making capitalists and their labor lieutenants. During the first World War the dominant Socialist Party leadership failed the workers, abetting the war and surrendering the everyday needs of the workers. But the Communist Party, true to its spirit of proletarian internationalism, will stand fast, come what may. Without fear, it will point the way for the workers along which the people can fight themselves out of the capitalist wilderness, and its militants will always be found in the very front line of the struggle.