

# LABOR ACTION

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A PAPER IN THE INTERESTS OF LABOR

ONE CENT

## Half of U.S. Workers Earn Less Than \$800 a Year

In 1939, the 38,322,420 workers in the United States had the shockingly low "median" income of \$800. The median income of 27,458,200 men workers was \$967, and of 10,864,220 women workers was \$540.

Those are some of the unpleasant facts in a report published last week by the Census Bureau. The bureau obtained the facts, for the first time in history, when its "enumerators" went from door to door in 1940 asking a question: "How much wage or salary income did you receive last year?"

Median income simply means that half the workers got incomes above that amount and half got incomes below it. In other words, half of all American workers received less than \$800 a year in 1939.

Only 1 per cent received \$5,000 and over, only 0.5 per cent received from \$4,000 to \$5,000, only 1.9 per cent from \$3,000 to \$4,000 and only 2.1 per cent from \$2,500 to \$3,000. Adding these figures, only 5.5 per cent, or about 1 of each 20, had a wage or salary income over \$2,500.

Incomes from \$2,000 to \$2,500 were received by 5.4 per cent of the wage and salary earners. Adding this group to the 5.5 per cent over \$2,500, we find that only 11 per cent of the total are earning the \$2,000 minimum required to support a family on a decent standard of living.

In the income groups from \$2,000 down to \$1,000 are 30 per cent of the wage and salary earners, and the remaining 59 per cent range from \$1,000 down to the unemployed who had no income whatever.

In other words, practically six of each ten wage and salary workers earned less than \$1,000 in 1939, which was more prosperous than most of the other years in the depression.

## If Odell Waller Dies on June 19...

An Editorial

Perhaps it will be too late. Perhaps by the time you pick up this copy of LABOR ACTION and glance over it on your way home from work, or read through it carefully after supper, it may be too late. Perhaps by then the body of Odell Waller will be lifeless, burned to death in the electric chair.

If that is so, if this poor Negro sharecropper of Virginia is burned to death, as he is scheduled to, on midnight June 19, then you, a white worker who believes in decency and fair play and equality for all people, or you, a black worker who believes that his people too have the right to live as human beings—then you must know why Odell Waller died, and you must remember.

You must know and remember that Odell Waller was burned

by the state of Virginia because he was poor and because he was a Negro, a voteless citizen disfranchised by the poll tax and by Jim Crow. That he was convicted by a jury of white poll tax payers, ten of whom were of the same class of landlords as the landlord whom Waller shot in self defense during a quarrel over crop shares.

"What!" thought these ten worthy specimens of democracy (poll tax, lynchings, Jim Crow) "shall we set free this black man who dared to insist on his equal share of the crop he farmed? That would give people ideas."

And so the great commonwealth of Virginia denied Odell



Waller his constitutional right to trial by a jury of his peers when it sentenced him to death.

Remember, then, on whose hands the blood of Odell Waller rests. Remember the Democratic Party politicians of Virginia, the landlords, the Jim Crows.

But remember, too, the U.S. Supreme Court—which Roosevelt was supposed to have packed with "liberals." Some liberals!

Twice they refused even to grant Odell Waller a hearing in his claim that his trial was unconstitutional since he had been tried by a poll tax jury, one which was not made up of his peers.

But the august, majestic assembly of nine old men—the patrons of our "democracy," the dispensers of justice—turned its head the other way and did not listen to Odell Waller's voice. After all, the voice of a black man who spent his life as a sharecropper!

Remember them, too; these nine old men who twice refused to even listen to Odell Waller's case—when Odell Waller's lifestream runs out.

But perhaps it is not too late. Perhaps you are reading these lines before midnight of June 19. If so, add your voice to the thousands who have already written to governor of Virginia, Colgate W. Darden. Write him or wire him. Let him know that you want Odell Waller to live. Let him know that you want not merely Odell Waller, the individual, to live; but that you see in Odell Waller a symbol of the oppressed of this country, a personification of all those to whom democracy is denied.

# SHOULD LABOR SUPPORT THE CRY FOR A SECOND FRONT?

## OUR FRONT—THE THIRD FRONT



The signing of the Anglo-Russian alliance, and the White House announcement that "full understanding was reached with regard to the urgent tasks of creating a second front in Europe in 1942" has brought to a head all previous discussion on the second front. Every individual, every group and organization is discussing the issue: Shall the United Nations invade Europe?

Although the military aspects of the matter (when shall the attempt be made, where, what forces shall be employed, etc.) remain a deep secret known only to the general staffs, the problem is openly discussed in the press, over the radio, among the people as a whole.

The second front is a question in which great populations are intensely interested because they realize the enormity of the proposal and the effect it will have upon the outcome of the war. The issue of an invasion of Europe is not simply military, but has become POLITICAL as well. For the whole problem of what the various nations are fighting for is involved.

Of special importance is this issue to the labor movement. For within the labor movement the Stalinist Communist Party and its friends have begun a consistent campaign to get the unions to support the second front; and in a number of instances have succeeded. Those unionists who do not adopt an attitude out of a mere unquestioning and reckless subservience to the needs of the Stalin regime in Russia as do the American Stalinists, must realize the grave responsibility involved for the labor movement if it actively champions the second front. It is for that reason that the issue must be carefully considered.

First, let us note who are the advocates of the second front. Foremost—and by far the loudest—are the Stalinists.

Allied with the Stalinists on this issue are the most jingoistic of the American papers; the most imperialist-minded radio commentators; the most ambitious militarists.

But it must be emphasized that ALL of the United Nations governments are ardently pro-second front although they may disagree as to just when. That is, all the ruling powers of the "democracies"—the capitalists, the officials, the imperialists, the public spokesmen—all of them want the second front.

Naturally, each group has its own motive.

That of the Stalinists and their friends is not hard to discover. They seek ONLY to serve their "beloved leader," Stalin, and his totalitarian regime in Moscow. The intensity of their shrieks for a second front increases directly with the intensity of Hitler's military pressure on the Russian front. Their purpose in demanding a second front is to relieve this pressure—regardless of its possibility or advisability.

They base their line not on the interests of the world working class as a whole, nor on the interests of the American and British workers, nor on the interests of the European workers oppressed by Hitler. As a matter of fact, they are not even greatly interested in the military consequences of a second front for the Allies. They serve the Stalinist bureaucracy, and that exclusively. They do not even discuss whether a second front would bring genuine freedom to the European people. Nor are they really interested in its mili-

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Kremlin Dictator



STALIN

## Dependents Get Handout

"Freedom from Want"—But Not for Soldier's Wife and Child

By SUSAN GREEN

The military pay allotment bill approved by the Senate and sent to the House is as good as passed. It makes at least one thing certain in this world of uncertainties:

While the men in arms will be fighting in foreign lands supposedly for the "four freedoms"—one of which is stated to be freedom from want—their families will be engaged in the centuries-old fight of the poor to keep the wolf away from the door, provided there is a door. For it is going to be as impossible for families to pay for rent, food and clothing out of the flagrantly low allowances for soldiers' dependents as to get an elephant into a dog house.

A woman with two children will have to get along on \$72 a month or \$16 a week for all three. This drop in the bucket, even in peacetime be-

fore the cost of living rose to its present levels, meant a sub-subsistence standard of living. Today it means a sub-sub-subsistence level of existence. Tomorrow—when prices climb higher, as they are already doing in spite of the farcical ceilings—the only thing \$16 a week will buy for three people is starvation.

To call this travesty "support of the dependents" of the men in arms is—to say the least—a misnomer. To call a spade a spade, Congress is passing a bill to force women into industry. For no mother will sit by and see her children "supported" in starvation. Small children certainly need a mother's personal care and attention, but first they need bread, shoes and a roof. Women will have no alternative except to go to work. So the "preservation of the home"—which is supposed to be another war

aim—will be put in dead storage by this very "generous" bill that Congress is passing.

The old and feeble will also suffer. A soldier's mother and father without support will be allowed \$47 a month, or about \$10 a week for both. Figure that out in terms of shelter, food and clothing. And these will be the lucky parents whose sons are not married. Dependent parents whose sons are married will have bestowed on them the still more "bounteous" sum of \$30 a month, or \$7.00 a week, for both.

Other provisions of the bill are even more niggardly than the above—hard as this may be to believe. For instance, if an unmarried soldier has one parent and one sister dependent on him, they will be allowed \$42 a month, or about \$9.00 a week. If the

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## Missouri Croppers' Struggle Reaches Climax

Hoped-for Rain Brings Cheer to Croppers, Who Continue Fight for 30 Cents an Hour

MISSOURI, June 15—The rain has come at last, tons of it, pouring down all over the place—the rain for which the day laborers and sharecroppers fighting for 30 cents an hour minimum wage have been waiting for. Because of the rain, few people were able to go into the fields last week. Everybody has been waiting. But one thing is certain. The wages in all Southeast Missouri already have risen from \$1.25 a day to \$2.00.

This is a victory due entirely to the militant struggles of the workers out here. There are rumors all over of wages higher than \$2.00. It is reported that the white workers around Parma were offered \$2.50 and the colored workers around Parma were offered \$2.00. Both groups understood that this was only a plot to divide the white and colored. Both refused to work and are still holding out for

their demand of 30 cents an hour. In New Madrid, Wardell, Sikeston, Portageville and Lilbourn the work-

### Famous Last Words

"Well, General (Stillwell), were the pow-wows a success? He laughed. 'Yep,' he said. 'Yep, yep, yep.' The Gissimo (Chiang Kai-shek) handed it to everybody, including his own generals, straight. So did (General) Alexander. So did I... Yep. Everybody took it right out of the spoon... I could report to my constituents, he said, that the situation is now well in hand. Then his eyes twinkled." (Clare Boothe, interviewing General Stillwell in Burma—LIFE—June 15, 1942.)

ers are all getting \$2.00 a day. In various places the workers devised their own method of "relief." Many accept the \$2.00 for the time being, for they have not worked since December and they had reached the point where they could no longer hold out. What they did was to work for one or two days out of the week in order that they might have some food to strike for a few days. They are watching the weather and the cotton closely and they know when the landlord will feel the pinch.

### Wednesday Crucial Day

No chopping was done on a large scale last week and the workers feel that this week is the crucial period. With no more rainfall, chopping should begin about Wednesday. All over the area the workers feel that if they can hold out until Friday, the landlords will have to pay the

30 cents an hour.

All this they are working out by themselves. The Stalinist leadership of their union, the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing & Allied Workers (CIO), has not taken one concrete step toward organizing the mass of workers.

It has been reported that the Southern Tenant Farmers Union has

### A Reminder

President Roosevelt, do you remember your suggestion, when you gave your economic program for the war, that all individual salaries should be limited to \$25,000 a year?

Well? When do you start? LABOR ACTION.

formed a local around Wardell. No one knows what its aims are in regard to raising the wages of day laborers of Southeast Missouri. But the workers express a desire for organization and say they're ready to accept it from anyone who'll give it.

Not only has the UCAPAWA leadership failed to send any organizers to help the workers. Its local representative, Otis Nation, came into the white project at Lilbourn and promised that the UCAPAWA was going to send, in the near future, an organizer to organize there for two months. The men all ask:

"Why doesn't the Henderson leadership do something now, when the men need help, when they're out fighting for 30 cents an hour? Why do they promise an organizer for after the chopping season, when it

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## THE WORLD AT WAR

### Stalin Completes His Entry into Imperialist Arena By Signing London, Washington Pacts

By WILLIAM BRAD

The alliance which Stalin signed with Churchill last week marked the culmination of his regime's movement onto the arena of world imperialism. It is the logical outcome of Stalin's whole policy in the war thus far. It marks the complete failure of the theoretical rationalization of his policy—the theory of "socialism in one country."

Stalin's defense of the Soviet Union was based on military means alone. He tried to match the Nazi Wehrmacht soldier for soldier, tank for tank and plane for plane. The industrial capacity of the Soviet Union, however, especially for the production of war goods, proved itself unequal to this task. So long, therefore, as this was Stalin's strategy there could be but one outcome: increasing dependence upon imperialist Britain and imperialist America for military supplies.

Stalin's politics have been to conduct a nationalistic war in the name of "defense of the Russian fatherland." To the German sol-

diers he offered nothing but destruction. To the German people he made no appeal, no gesture. To the people of Europe he remains the invader of the Baltic states, Finland and Bessarabia and the partner of Hitler.

These political considerations continue to exert a strong influence, despite any admiration which has grown up for the military achievements of the Stalinist armies.

### Results of Stalin's Policy

It is natural, therefore, that there has been no response from the European masses, no signs of sympathy with the Soviet Union except in France, where this has largely been produced by Stalinist agitation. From inside Germany has come not a word. Stalin has succeeded only in forcing the German soldiers and workers further into the arms of Hitler!

The masses of Europe, and of Germany especially, would have been the natural and most effective supporters of a revolutionary Soviet Union. But the Stalinist regime has in-

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