

Youth and Children--the Worst Sufferers from the Crisis

SEEK TO USE THEM TO BUILD FASCIST ARMY

By I. AMTER

MILLIONS of boys and girls have graduated from the high schools and colleges and have never seen the inside of a factory. Not that they do not want to work; they want to work, but the growing gap between production and distribution, caused by capitalist exploitation, brought about the crisis, and their entrance to the factory was barred. Even if the crisis should "lift," and there is not the slightest prospect of it, they would not get jobs. Millions of workers are doomed to permanent unemployment--and today the young workers and children are the worst sufferers.

Not long ago--in the days before the present crisis--it was seen that young workers were taking the place of the older men. This became so sharp that organizations of men above 45 years were formed to fight for jobs. Young workers would work cheaper and faster, and skill was becoming less of an asset, owing to the application of highly complicated machinery. Since the crisis broke, and particularly in the past two years, young workers have been turned out of the factories in masses, and wherever there was need of workers, their places were given to the older men.

These older men, on the other hand, are given the pay of young workers, and they are speeded to the limit. Out of fear of the direst hunger, they are working like slaves.

Only one exception can be made in this respect; in the lighter industries--food, light metal, needle, textile, etc.--young workers still play a large role, but their wages are miserable, going down to as low as 2 cents a day for part-time work and \$1.08 for 80 hours of work in Connecticut! This is utter slavery and starvation even when working!

THE masses of young workers in the streets get no relief whatever and no jobs. They are openly discriminated against. They are supposed to have "supporters" at home--the unemployed father who receives hunger relief, if he gets any at all. The Negro young workers are the worst sufferers of all, for their parents get no relief or a greatly reduced relief, it being the "theory" that the Negroes and certain foreign-born workers (Latin-Americans and Italians in New York) are used to a "lower standard of living," and therefore must be satisfied with less relief. The young and single workers get relief only when a stiff fight is put up for them.

The task of mobilizing and organizing the young workers for relief is a MAJOR task. The capitalists do not regard it of no moment. The many clubs being organized, the interest taken by such "humanitarians" as Newton D. Baker (former secretary of war) and Alfred E. Smith, Tammany chieftain, shows that the capitalist class realizes the potential power of the youth.

This is seen particularly in connection with the homeless youth. Who are the homeless youth? They are American boys and girls, who are driven out of their homes by hunger. Their families are unemployed; relief is insufficient. They starve at home, and in order to relieve the family of the burden of feeding more mouths, they leave home, hit the road in search of something to eat, somewhere to work (if that can be found).

Out on the road, they are regarded by the bosses as enemies of society. The police are against them. The railroad guards regard them as criminals. They are shot down in the railroads, many of them are killed and injured climbing on and off the freight cars. They wander from place to place, going to the warmer climates in winter and returning north in the summer, in the hope of finding food and possibly work.

They have been treated as outcasts--as untouchables--they are nomads. Therefore they band together. They feel that the com-

munity is against them--and their experiences convince them. When they arrive at a city, ganged together in larger groups as the only way of protecting themselves from the police and company guards, they frequently fall into the clutches of the law. They are taken before the judge, who either sends them to jail or gives them suspended sentences, with a warning to get out of town. This means a ban upon them in town after town. Therefore they are on the go, with the "jungles" and box cars as their homes.

PROBLEM SOLVED IN SOVIET UNION

THIS was a problem in the Soviet Union after the Revolution and particularly after the famine, when the parents and relatives of many children died fighting against the counter-revolution and hunger, and the children were deserted. They became nomads, little brigands. But today they are completely rehabilitated and there is no youth problem in the Soviet Union in this respect, for every young worker studies and works.

But in the United States with no prospect of the crisis lifting, with the assurance even of capitalist economists that should we return to the peak production of 1929, 45 per cent of the workers will never again find work, the homeless youth are congregated in all parts of the country. Fifteen hundred pass through Kansas City a day. They gather in gangs of 200 to 300 in the warmer parts of California. Some even go to Mexico, to escape the winter. But even in the big cities, they are to be found in the jungles, Hoovervilles, flop-houses. They are being offered "higher education" in the schools, just as the city governments advocated keeping the children in the high schools, because there was no work. But the government did not say how the children would be fed and clothed, on the miserable relief and wages the workers receive.

BOSSES PLAN FASCIST ARMY--

With the number of homeless youth growing by leaps and bounds, so that some reports declare that there are at least 2,000,000 of them, the capitalists are using these homeless boys to build a fascist army.

Yes, literally a fascist army. In the Newsboys Club of New York City, they welcome the homeless boy. Once in the club, he is in prison. He dare not leave. The police seek his parents, no matter in what part of the country, with

the aim of sending him home. The boy refuses, knowing that there is no bread at home--just the reason he left. He is threatened with jail or--

The "or" is embodied in the proposal of Glassford of veteran fame in the bloody battle of Washington on July 28. This great "friend" of the ex-soldiers, who engineered the attack on them in Washington, has suddenly discovered a "soft spot" in his heart for the homeless youth. Glassford proposes a government appropriation of \$15,000,000 for the establishment of military camps for the homeless youth. At these camps they will be offered food and lodging, sports, military training--everything that the average boy desires--but they will be under military regime. They will receive the proper "education" against the workers, the unemployed, the Communists, and all fighting sections of the population. This idea is being embodied in a bill proposed to the Senate by Senator Wagner, who demands an appropriation of \$10,000,000. And Senator Wagner is also regarded as a "friend of the people," supported by the reactionary chiefs of the American Federation of Labor.

There is still another proposal introduced in the House to put the young unemployed into the army for a period of six months, with reduced pay, to "improve their morals" and their bodies.

THESE are steps of the gravest nature for the revolutionary movement. It is a formidable army that Glassford, Wagner, Baker and Smith have in mind--an army to be used against the unemployed, against strikers, against all the struggles of the workers. It presents a problem of the greatest moment to the workers.

The Unemployed Councils, Young Communist League, the revolutionary unions and the Party must carry on intense work among the young workers. We must concentrate at those places where the young, unemployed are particularly to be found, connecting them up with the employed workers. We must build up organization among the homeless youth. In each city and town they must be sought out, and a fight be made for their relief.

Such fights have been won despite regulations. These youth must be provided with the forms of activity that youth demands. This is not a question only for the youth--it is a burning question for the entire working class.

Youth and the Chicago United Front

(Continued)

During the speech of the principal one member of the Unemployed Council booed him. Another member told the one who booed to shut up. The first one refused. So the second one took a punch at him. This resulted in a fist fight that put the whole meeting in an uproar. Many parents, seeing this, began walking out of the hall. Some came over to me and told me: "You see we agree with you. But look at those people (pointing out those who started the fight). They are a bunch of Communists; they were sent in to start a fight and break up the meeting."

During the fight the principal got about 25 parents in a corner who were willing to accept his proposals and held a meeting with them. At the same time four members of the Unemployed Council jumped on the platform yelling that they had taken over the meeting. One yelled to the principal: "We brand you a traitor to the working class." Despite this they were able to get a number of women to go to the alderman to present the demands.

I was informed a few days later that the children had been given meal tickets in the school and also tickets for clothing.

It is important to discuss the activity at this school from the

point of view of what lessons we can learn:

1. The comrades from the Unemployed Council, instead of going to the meeting with the idea of uniting all the workers for these issues, actually went with the idea of "capturing" the meeting or "forcing" the workers to accept our leadership. A united front of all these parents cannot be formed on the basis of who will be chairman of the meeting. The United Front can only be formed around the issues of the workers.

2. Instead of our comrades booing and hissing those who disagreed with our proposals, our comrades should have discussed them, with the aim of convincing everyone of the correctness of what we proposed.

3. This experience shows that before such large meetings, where all kinds of workers will be present, the Unemployed Council should meet and work out its plans so that every member of the Council will know what to do, and also assign a number of speakers from the Council so that not everyone acts as he pleases.

4. Another serious weakness in this struggle was that the children were not sufficiently involved.

5. The Young Communist League in the west side played no role in the activity.