

# World Socialism

## THE LONDON LABOR CONFERENCE

By HERBERT ZAM

Nothing could have been more appropriate than the conference of the representatives of the International Labor movement to meet the danger of war which was made sharper by Hitler's military occupation of the Rhineland. And nothing could be more inappropriate than what came out of the conference. For at a time when labor had to show not only its international solidarity, but its complete independence of the capitalist war maneuvers, the conference demonstrated how the policy of supporting capitalist sanctions had destroyed the independent position of labor and made extremely difficult, if not impossible, any unanimity in the ranks of labor.

### Dangerous Game

All that it was possible for the various representatives to agree upon was a ringing denunciation of the Hitler war preparations. (What about the war preparations of all other capitalist countries? Is it not a dangerous game which plays into the hands of the imperialist rivals of the fascist countries to give the workers the impression that they are for peace?) When the question of sanctions was touched, there was an immediate division. The French representatives were for demanding the application of sanctions against Germany, but the British were opposed. What is important is that their opposition was not based on refusal to be associated with capitalist policies, but was entirely a result of the specific policies of their own government.

Sir Walter Citrine, who was a veritable firebrand in demanding sanctions against Italy, was just as fiery in opposing sanctions against Germany. What has happened to the theory that the British Labor Party compelled the British government to vote sanctions against Italy because it was an aggressor? Is Hitler any the

less an aggressor? Has not the League of Nations already condemned Germany as a treaty violator?

The British government opposes sanctions against Germany because its imperialist interests have in the past dictated limited support to Germany in the restoration of its military power so as to balance the growing power of France. The British government favored sanctions against Italy because its own imperialist interests in the Mediterranean and East Africa were challenged by Italy's invasion of Ethiopia. Is it a pure accident that the policies of Citrine coincide so exactly with the policies of the British Tory government? Once again we see how an imperialist government has been able to maneuver so cleverly that it could make the labor movement believe that the policies of the government were labor policies rather than imperialist policies.

### Skin Deep

It was indeed a sad spectacle to see the labor representatives of the various countries line up in a manner similar to their capitalist governments. It is this which

makes it possible for the capitalist press to report:

"Labor leaders of fifteen European countries proved at their conference here today that, although they are Socialists and internationalists on the surface, most of them are also patriots and nationalists under the skin."

Under the circumstances, nothing else could issue from this conference than what came out. The workers are asked to rely upon the League of Nations and its machinery, upon "collective security," upon pacts and counterpacts—in short, upon all of the methods of capitalist diplomacy which historically have been the means for preparing war, not for preserving peace. The only item which can be at all welcomed is the declaration of the need for defending the Soviet Union against an imperialist aggressor, but this is tempered, because with it is also the declaration that "all must rally to the support of any state attacked by an aggressor." What interests have the workers in rushing into a war between two capitalist countries?

Meeting at a time when world capitalism has so obviously broken down, when unemployment has become a permanent phenomenon, when the only way capitalism has out of the crisis is fascism and war, the conference did not see fit to call upon the workers for a renewed struggle against the capitalist system and for Socialism. It did not see fit to call for international labor unity against capitalism and against war.

### A Real Program

Aside from the differences already noted, it is evident that

there were other differences at the conference. One delegate voted against and several abstained in the final vote on the declaration which was adopted.

The sentiment for a genuine proletarian policy in the struggle against the war danger is developing. Until recently, the American Socialist Party was one of the few which opposed reliance upon the League of Nations and upon capitalist sanctions as a means of preventing war. The recent events in the field of international relations have shown how correct this position is. The London International Labor Conference shows further, perhaps in a negative way, the dangers inherent in a policy of close association with the actions of capitalist governments. For such association inevitably leads to defense of the policies of the individual capitalist countries and therefore to support of those governments in war.

If the labor movement permits itself to drift this way, it will wake up when it is already too late, as in 1914. The fight against war is impossible without a militant fight, by the workers of each country, against the capitalist class of their own country.

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