The C.I.O. And Labor's Political Independence

By JAY LOVESTONE

IT has been a very long time since the class conscience of the employers has been so intensely aroused to the extent it is today over the challenge of the C.I.O. Almost instinctively the average employer—particularly, the average boss employing a fairly large number of workers—sees in the C.I.O. a source of alarm, a sort of portent of change without limit.

It would be futile to try to fix at this time the potentialities of the great awakening of labor, of the mighty upsurge of the workers, millions of whom have been stirred by the C.I.O. However, it is entirely correct to emphasize that the employing class is sound in its sensing that the very emergence of the C.I.O. means a new mood among the workers, spells a whole set of new attitudes of labor towards the problems of today and the questions of tomorrow. For this reason, it is vital for the workers, particularly those of us who are already class-conscious, to recognize that, tho the C.I.O. is primarily a movement for organizing the unorganized in the basic industries, in the mass-production industries, its implications reach far beyond even these very important limits.

Towards a Program of Social Legislation

In this sense, no one can exaggerate the urgency and the import of the C.I.O. and its affiliates preparing a positive program of social legislation for which labor can be called upon to campaign, around which labor can reasonably and effectively be asked to rally. As Roosevelt will be coming forward with item after item of his program of social legislation, progressive labor will find it almost uniformly inadequate. What is more, as Roosevelt will be facing ever-more determined opposition to even his inadequate measures, he will begin to retreat before the heavy artillery of biggest business. This will mean that the Roosevelt crumbs will be reduced and the working and living standards depressed. Nor is there any doubt that some labor leaders will meekly and mutely hail Roosevelt measures without giving serious thought to the inherent dangers and inadequacies. Thus we find that even after John L. Lewis very correctly criticised certain features of the President's wages and hours program, some influential labor spokesmen did not take the cue and, to the detriment of the best interests of the workers, approved the White House measure without qualification.

The very fury that has been unleashed against the sit-down, the mounting number of states rushing with legislation against the sit-in strike, the serious moves being contemplated in a number of important legislatures for dealing "effectively" with acute industrial problems —all emphasize that that the workers thruout the length and breadth of the land had better lose no time in beginning to give the most thorogoing consideration to the whole problem of the relation of labor to the government. What has been happening to the rights and lives of the workers in Monroe, Johnstown and Chicago presents a gruesome tale of three cities in three states governed by loyal Roosevelt governors. Here are painful and rotten specimens of the anti-labor handiwork of three Democratic party progressives.

No Hat-in-Hand Attitude For Labor

One thing is positively obvious and essential: Labor cannot have a hat-in-hand attitude towards Roosevelt or any other part of the government. If any spokesman of labor should ever visit the White House hat-in-hand, then he will leave only with a ball and chain on his legs. Here is no road to freedom. Such cheap sycophancy, such lack of independence, such kow-towing to Roosevelt or to any of his aides can only prove suicidal —especially in view of the rising demand for government regulation, supervision, incorporation and control of trade unions, for virtual government policing of unions. Only by hitting hard, only by aiming the blows well, only by fighting resolutely for the rights of **labor as labor**, for the rights of **the workers as a class** can the working masses improve their status—their social, economic and political position. Only thru such **independent** action, regardless of honeyed words or saccharined phrases, can labor insure success in its fight for tolerable working conditions and a decent livelihood.

Prerequisites For a Labor Party

Unless and until labor—on a national scale—develops a sufficiently critical and independent spirit and attitude towards **all** capitalist politicians and policies, there can be no serious talk of an effective labor party movement. Furthermore, not until labor gets some practical experience with liberal, progressive, as well as radical and reactionary capitalist political saviors on the basis of a struggle for concrete legislative demands, for a program of social legislation, will the working class be ready to enter into a national labor party movement. Here are two prerequisites that American labor will have to meet —whether all of us like it or not— before the powerful trade unions will be ready to serve as the basis —as the economic foundation—of a mass labor party. Without these prerequisites being satisfied, without the mighty unions of the C.I.O. having reached this stage, all labor parties made to order, or by inspiration of the Communist Party's latest loathing of lawlessness, can be only pitiful caricatures. Here we can learn much from the experience of our British brothers.

It is on this account that we attach so much significance to the increasing frequency and effectiveness with which John L. Lewis, Homer Martin, Charles S. Zimmerman and other labor leaders of their militancy and type have been speaking up on concrete problems of social legislation. It is with this in mind that we render only the highest praise to the resolutions adopted by the last convention of the I.L.G.W.U. on the question of social insurance and the movement for the incorporation of trade unions. In short, not until enough of labor's ranks learn to think, act and fight effectively for or against certain specific political demands will it be able to develop sufficient political consciousness for launching a political party of its own class—a labor party. These are but signposts to a road we must urge and help prepare labor to take.

Attaining a Higher Unity

Such struggles for specific social legislative measures, such preparatory stages on the road to an independent party of the working class, to a labor party, are a tremendous aid to the unification of the working class. No one can overemphasize the significance of the contribution the C.I.O. has made in this direction, that is, towards a greater, towards a higher labor unity. Only the demagogue or those who have made special studies in how to be idiots can now speak of the "tragedy of the split of labor" caused by the C.I.O. Only those whose policies are determined by forces and factors that have nothing to do with the objective situation at hand can repeat, parrot-like, or even with a thimble-full of intelligence, the slogan "for a powerful united A. F. of L." On this occasion we might advise the Communist Party to stop circulating its pamphlet, of very recent date, entitled: "For a powerful united A. F. of L."

That labor under the banner of the C.I.O. is hammering out a much higher unity of its ranks, **now and today**, is evidenced by some of the inspiring strike struggles now going on. Confirmation of this is legion. Lansing's "labor holiday," the magnificent solidarity demonstrated by the C.I.O. in rallying active support for the Republic Steel strikers thru having thousands of coal diggers drop their picks and down tools, the extremely laudable move made by the S.W.O.C. in hitting at the Bethlehem magnates at war with the railroad workers, bring nothing but joy and courage to militant labor fighters everywhere. From this point of view of welding a firmer and broader labor unity, as the C.I.O. fights on and storms position after position, it becomes essential to place on the order of the day the problem of drawing closer to or into the ranks of the C.I.O. the independent railway labor organizations which have been outside of the A. F. of L. all these years.

No ideological differences that may exist between these bona-fide labor organizations and some C.I.O. unions should be allowed to stand in the way of such collaboration and unification. As the strike conflicts will assume more bitterness, as the employing class will begin to launch counter-offensives, the strategic importance of solidarity between the railroad labor unions and the C.I.O. unions already established or still to be established in the mass-production industries will assume increasing importance. Hence, we cannot emphasize with too great energy the imperative need of the C.I.O. to drive on at an accelerated tempo in its effort to enhance American labor's unity in this fashion.

Powers Move Against Spain

(*Continued from Page* 1)

situation is growing markedly worse. The bourgeois-socialist-communist regime of Negrin-Prieto is moving steadily towards the right, liquidating the revolutionary gains of the last few months and thereby undermining the power of effective struggle against Franco and opening the way for some sort of "compromise" that would subject the Spanish people to a military dictatorship under the patronage of the "great democracies." As part of its whole reactionary course, the Negrin-Prieto cabinet has, under the spur of the official communist leaders, intensified its crusade against the revolutionary sections of the working class. A brazen attempt is being made to link up the POUM with some sort of fascist conspiracy, for much the same political reasons that, twenty years ago, in July 1917, the Bolsheviks were accused by the bourgeois-socialist government of Russia of being German spies and Lenin was officially charged with the crime of high treason. But history has already given an annihilating answer to the reactionary slanderers in Russia and so it will again in Spain.