
LEGISLATIVE PROBLEMS IN ILLINOIS

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THE Sixty-first Illinois General Assembly, recently adjourned, can be characterized as having been one of the more progressive of the sessions in recent years in, what may sound paradoxical, a negative fashion. This evaluation necessarily takes into account the fact that the Democratic majority in the Senate was by no means a solid New Deal majority and that the House had a Republican majority. During this session the voices of labor and the democratic forces were listened to more earnestly than ever before, and marked success attended the fight of the progressives to defeat the most menacing of the reactionary bills sponsored by the Republican Party. Encouraged and spurred by the joint action of the A. F. of L., C.I.O., and railroad unions, and by a hitherto unknown unity of all progressive forces, which reached its height in the State Conference for Social Legislation held on May 31, the Democratic Party, under the leadership of Mayor Edward J. Kelly of Chicago, pursued what was in the main a united policy based on a New Deal program.

As a result, the New Deal democracy in the state can record certain outstanding victories. Chief among them are, first, the defeat of the Lantz Bill, which aimed to put the unions

in a straitjacket; second, the defeat of the Collins (Little Dies) Bill, designed to set up a red-baiting weapon to attack the New Deal in 1940; third, the defeat of the *Tribune*-sponsored Public Service Building Corporation Bill, intended to paralyze low-cost Federal housing in Illinois, fourth, increase in old age pension payments by ten dollars a month, and permission hereafter to old age pensioners to retain insurance policies up to a value of \$1,000; fifth, increase in workmen's compensation benefits; sixth, passage of the bill to give women the right to serve on juries; seventh, the appropriation of \$60,000,000 for the building of a super-highway system; eighth, passage of bill requiring prevailing wage rates on public works.

A qualified victory was the allotment of \$72,000,000 for relief for a period of eighteen months. This was a victory for the progressives, inasmuch as this appropriation is the result of a struggle by the New Dealers against the attempts of the Republicans to cut even this inadequate amount. While this allows only \$4,000,000 a month—\$2,000,000 below the minimum required, according to Leo M. Lyons, secretary of the Illinois Emergency Relief Commission, to provide a subsistence budget for the relief families in Illinois—it is consid-

erably better than the appropriation of only \$3,000,000 per month which the Republicans fought to put over.

But while the foregoing marked a forward step in the organization of the people's forces, many of the most crucial problems were not met, and the legislature failed to enact a positive program of social legislation. Most of the labor bills sponsored by the Illinois Federation of Labor and Labor's Non-Partisan League failed to pass, including the vital anti-injunction bill. Proposals to amend the state constitution to make possible a state income tax were defeated. The relief appropriation is decidedly inadequate, and a whole series of urgent needs of the people, such as housing, health, and the high cost of living, were not dealt with.

The explanation for this must be sought for in the still insufficient awareness and alertness of the people to problems of legislation, to the reactionary role of the Republican Party, and the aid given to reaction by anti-New Deal Democrats, such as Representative Adamowski, and in the inadequate sustained organized pressure of the progressive forces.

The failure to meet the relief, tax and other problems dare not be forgotten by the New Dealers. It is necessary to see that demagogues and reactionaries will attempt to point the finger at the New Deal as responsible for this situation. The New Dealers must launch a powerful movement for the *calling of a special session of the state legislature*, which otherwise will not meet again until 1941. A special session will have to be fought for and carried through to a successful conclusion. It can be done. It must

be done if victory in 1940 is to be assured for the New Deal in Illinois.

For the type of legislation emanating from Springfield in the next twelve months will decide to a great extent whether Illinois will go New Deal. In casting their votes, the people will be decisively influenced by the kind of fight for progressive social legislation conducted in the state legislature in the coming period by the New Dealers. The people do not want New Dealers who pull their punches. They want to see the New Deal put into life locally. Short of that they may be driven to try the demagogic promises of the Republicans.

Outstanding among the unsolved tasks before the special session will be that of relief. A huge percentage of Illinois citizenry are dependent on relief for their very subsistence, and they will draw conclusions for 1940 from the actions of the state legislature in meeting their needs.

At the end of April of this year the legislature appropriated emergency relief funds for the months of May and June. The appropriation was a compromise. *It failed to meet the needs of the unemployed.* True, the Kelly forces worked hard to achieve the passage of even the amount that was appropriated. But the fact remains that the unemployed in Cook County now receive only 65 per cent of a so-called "normal" budget, as against the 85 per cent level they received previously.

It would be dangerous to assume that the 1,300,000 persons in Illinois who are dependent on public agencies for their subsistence, with only a comparatively small proportion reached by such organs as the *Daily Record*,

understood the role of the Republicans in forcing the 20 per cent cut. Those who would lead the progressive camp must tirelessly explain the actualities of the struggle—point out that the Kelly forces might have won a one hundred per cent restoration of the budget, but only to the extent that they were supported by a powerful and sustained mass movement.

It was in this situation that Governor Horner chose to come out with an "economy" speech. Yes, he said, the unemployed should get assistance, so should the aged, so should the teachers—but "the budget must be balanced."

BUDGET AND TAXES

Governor Horner must be shown that he falls into a trap in listening to the cries of America's tory gang that the budget must be balanced. Yes, it would be touching, this solicitude of reaction for the welfare of the budget—if it did not mask the deadliest of intentions to the welfare of America.

The budget must be balanced, they say—men may go hungry, children may starve—but there is hope in the land if the budget is balanced. Though there be distress throughout the length and breadth of our country; though far more than one-third of the people are ill-fed, ill-clothed, ill-housed; though slow starvation is the fate of hundreds of thousands, balance the budget, do not appropriate the funds that are necessary for the social welfare of the people, "save the future generations" from the payment of bills.

Perhaps, though, there is another motive that explains this economy

urge? Can it be that these men wish to make sure that their bond and interest payments will be guaranteed? Are they afraid that the government might decide to tax the surplus funds of industry, the accumulated profits of industry, to feed, clothe and house the millions at the expense of diminishing the stream of bond and interest payments to America's sixty families?

There is still another aspect of this tax question. The progressive and liberal democracy must understand that unless this tax question is solved, on this issue alone reaction will ride to victory. Reaction is utilizing the tax question to divide the people, to stir up antagonisms between labor and the middle class, between the unemployed and the employed, between the city folk and the farmer. It is time that the progressive camp boldly take up this question and not allow itself to be put on the defensive. The basic question before the New Deal in Congress and the state legislatures is: *shall the human budget or the bankers' budget be balanced?* The New Deal answer must be a program of health, education, housing, public works, jobs for the unemployed, social and national security. With it must go a tax program to make possible this program of social welfare, and to make this possible by taxing the wealthy class and not by taking back with the left hand what the right hand has given.

In organizing the people around a progressive tax program, the task of dramatizing the whole question stands out. For example, the people must be helped to draw the fullest conclusions from a comparison of the difficulty met by the Ward Bill to appropriate

\$3,000,000 emergency relief and the ease with which Senate Bill 117 passed, a bill setting aside \$38,000,000 for the payment of interest and retirement of state bonded indebtedness.

The relief budget was cut 20 per cent. But a 20 per cent cut in the relief budget is not just 20 per cent, it is 20 per cent off the \$35.27 which was the *total* monthly relief budget in May for a family of four in Chicago—total for all purposes. That 20 per cent cut may have safeguarded interest payments to some LaSalle Street banks, but it also meant that a few more young people left home, a few more homes were broken up, a few more human beings clamored for space at the overcrowded County Hospital, a few more minds cracked under the strain, a few more years were stolen from the lives of the working class.

It should be continuously and tirelessly hammered home that under the present state taxation system, 90 per cent of the taxes are paid by the worker, farmer, small business man, and small home-owner. It is a system which makes it a matter of child's play for the finance capitalist whose property is concealed behind pieces of paper—mortgages, stocks, bonds and the like—to evade taxation. Here are some figures to illustrate, taken from a pamphlet dealing with the question of a constitutional convention, published by the Legislative Reference Bureau, a state department:

"More than two and one-quarter billions of dollars of bank deposits alone escape taxation in Illinois. . . . Attention is drawn to the assessment of stocks and bonds in Cook County, in 1929, when the value and volume of these securities were at their highest. The assessed value was \$739,857 and the

assessed full value \$1,997,613," although "many individuals alone owned more than was assessed for the entire country; and the outstanding bonds of each of a great many business corporations owned mostly by residents of Cook County exceeded the assessor's figures many times."

While the wealthy escape taxation, the workers and farmers are heavily hit by the real estate tax, which bears with full severity on the small home and farm, and by the 3 per cent sales tax which has aptly been called an "upside down income tax" and a tax based upon "inability to resist rather than ability to pay."

As opposed to this sort of tax program, the New Deal democracy must fight for a tax program to include: passage of a state income tax as the keystone; a tax on bank deposits; a tax on the receipts of interest, dividends, bonuses, fees, charges, and profits from the sales of securities by banks, insurance companies, municipalities; a chain store tax; a tax on stock and bond transfers; graduated taxation on gross receipts of businesses doing more than \$50,000 a year, etc.

SUSTAINED STRUGGLE BY PROGRESSIVE FORCES

But to achieve this program will require, in the words of Earl Browder, "concerted daily action by the masses themselves, at the bottom, in the localities and municipalities."

This brings us to the key question of organization of the democratic camp. In brief, the problem is this: how to achieve the *sustained, consistent, organized* work to match the *sustained, consistent organized* work of the reactionaries.

Let us take as an example the cam-

paigned to defeat the anti-labor Lantz Bill. This bill was one of a host of similar bills that have been introduced by the Republican Party under the guidance of its central command in the legislatures of most of the important states. In practice it would have nullified the Wagner Act in the state.

The bill so alarmed labor that it has led to one most excellent result: organized unity of C.I.O. and A. F. of L., first to defeat this bill and then with regard to other legislation. At one hearing 400 labor leaders joined in such powerful unity that the Senate Committee at the conclusion of the hearing adjourned with a promise not to do anything further about the bill.

But here labor learned a big lesson. The committee hearing the bill waited until the delegations left Springfield, they waited until the resolutions and letters of protest ceased coming in—then they quietly met and voted to recommend the bill.

Conclusions for labor and the progressive camp: (1) labor unity cannot be sporadic and isolated, but must be strengthened and sustained; (2) reaction is determined and unscrupulous; eternal vigilance is still the price of liberty; (3) it is necessary to develop the organizational forms and methods of work in the legislative field, watching the activity in the state and federal legislatures like hawks, responding quickly to developments, and raising to the utmost the level of development of legislative work.

When labor received the double cross it carried its move toward unity still further with electrifying results. On May 24 a joint union appeal

against the bill was issued, signed by representatives of the Illinois State Federation of Labor, the Congress of Industrial Organizations, the Railroad Brotherhoods, and the Women's Trade Union League.

A week later the bill was defeated in the State Senate by a vote of 23 to 16, while the galleries were crowded with labor delegations and delegates of the first Illinois State Legislative Conference which had opened on that day. Said Senator Harold Ward of Chicago, leader of the fight against the Lantz Bill and Kelly spokesman:

"The Republican press has disowned responsibility for this bill. How will they explain the vote here today? The Democratic Party has always enjoyed the confidence of labor. Our main support is the laboring men and women of the state. There has been some talk of 1940 around here. After this vote is announced, the Democrats will be returned to office for another four years in 1940."

In considering forms and methods of legislative work, it is necessary to stress particularly the following:

a. The necessity of coordinated action behind the legislative programs of such organizations as the A. F. of L., the C.I.O., the Railroad Brotherhoods, the Workers Alliance, the Parents and Teachers Association, A Better Chicago League, and the Illinois League of Women Voters. Indispensable is the unity of labor's organizations. Through conferences, through joint delegations, through separate delegations lobbying on the same measures, through resolutions, in one form and another, unity of action is being achieved.

b. The setting up of a network of legislative committees in all organ-

izations of the people to guarantee a continuous flow of letters, telegrams and resolutions reaching the legislators from the folks back home. The reactionaries, having at their disposal financial and other resources, have developed this form of pressure to a high degree. The progressive forces must do likewise.

c. A tremendously important role in developing the unity of the people to make their will evident was played by the legislative conferences that took place in the course of the Congressional elections last fall and in the course of the aldermanic elections in Chicago this spring. Such conferences are a new feature of American political life. It is necessary to remedy one outstanding weakness in their work so far, that is, the failure of continuations committees set up by such conferences to carry through continuous legislative campaigns, organize mass meetings, delegations, and lobbying activities, and in general work in a sustained way in behalf of progressive legislation, and to report back regularly to their parent bodies.

d. The building of progressive blocs in Congress and the state legislature. This means the establishing of personal contact with individual Congressmen, state legislators, aldermen, and other political figures by the members of the various trade unions, peace, women's, youth, Negro and other organizations; this means a most flexible and sympathetic approach to the new progressive outlook of political machines or sections of political machines; this means more directly involving these decisive groups and individuals.

e. Every election, no matter what its

character, must be recognized as being a struggle between the New Deal and the reactionary opposition. The June judicial elections were one example. The Republicans broadcast far and wide their attacks on the New Deal. The Democratic judicial slate, they said, was backed by the Kelly-Nash machine, and they proceeded demagogically to befuddle the issues of taxation, unemployment, clean government, etc. The labor and New Deal forces, however, took the counter-offensive, with the result that the Democratic slate won a two-to-one victory.

f. The necessity of special forms of organization and appeal for the women, the youth—especially the first voters, and the national minority groups. A high degree of organization obtains among all these categories, with most of the organizations taking a progressive outlook. Such an organization as the League of Women Voters, for example, has gone on record nationally against a foreign policy of isolation. The youth organizations are very strongly for the New Deal and progress. This was shown in the Chicago municipal elections in the way Protestant, Catholic, Negro, Jewish, American Youth Congress, Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. and other groups united in the Non-Partisan Youth Committee for the reelection of Mayor Kelly. The importance of the national minority groups in Illinois cannot be overestimated. In the city of Chicago the foreign-born, together with those born here of foreign parentage, constitute a majority of the population. The major political parties have long recognized their importance. Because of their hatred of fascism, these groups

belong in the army of the New Deal. This is true of such groups as the Czechs, the Poles, the Jews and others. But a big task is that of overcoming the mistaken tendency among some New Dealers to relinquish the "German vote" to the reactionary camp.

g. The necessity of building in the city and state the circulation of a labor and progressive press, and in the first place, of the *Daily Record*. It is doubtful whether without the *Daily Record* the Chicago elections would have taken the course they did. But while the paper was able during the election campaign through extraordinary efforts to finance an enormously increased circulation, the task of circulation building in preparation for 1940 becomes the task of all who call themselves progressive. There is no other medium so admirably fitted to bring clarity and organization into that still considerably spontaneous movement of the American people which is developing into the democratic front.

CHIEF LEGISLATIVE TASKS

Chief among the legislative tasks that face the democratic front, in addition to those already discussed, are the following: farm legislation, old age pensions, constitutional convention, passage of an anti-injunction law, defeat of anti-alien legislation, the struggle for peace.

In the last few decades the farmers of Illinois have in the main voted Republican. In the 1940 elections it is imperative that this be changed, that the progressive traditions of the 1870's and 1890's—when the Illinois farmer was the center of the Grange movement and voted in masses for the

Greenbackers, Populists, and the third party movements of that period—be revived. But the key to this is the beginning of a serious and systematic attempt by labor to help the farmer achieve more equitable prices and marketing facilities for his products, and by fighting for old age pensions, for rural W.P.A. projects, rural electrification, health protection, education and similar needs of the farmer.

The old age pensions movement is one which in certain areas in Illinois, such as Peoria, determines the course of elections. In the last elections the movement went Republican on the basis of demagogic promises to support the Townsend Plan. The followers of the Townsend movement must be won to the progressive movement where they belong.

The question of legislation affecting peace must be more sharply brought forward in the legislative movements. There is a tendency to leave out this question, on the "theory" that peace is a question for Congress and not for local legislative bodies to consider. Resolutions in support of a progressive foreign policy can be introduced into governing bodies of the state and its political subdivisions. More aggressive action by trade union bodies is essential. The women, youth and national groups can be mobilized on this question.

The anti-alien bills introduced by the Republican Party in state legislatures throughout the country and in Congress are one of the most serious attacks yet made on the democratic institutions and practices of our country. They follow the Hitler tactic of splitting the unity of the people on the basis of incitement

against one section of the population. A good example was the introduction in the Illinois legislature of fifteen bills to prohibit the issuance of licenses to aliens for the practicing of a number of professions, in most of which aliens constitute an infinitesimal proportion of the profession. This insidious attack on our democracy must be fought relentlessly.

The calling of a constitutional convention more and more emerges as a key question before the people of Illinois. We have discussed the necessity of such a convention in order to solve the tax problem. But in addition there are the following urgent questions:

- (a) To reapportion the state: the last reapportionment was in 1901; today, Cook County, with over 52 per cent of the population, has only nineteen senatorial districts, although it is entitled to twenty-seven.
- (b) Home rule: Chicago, a metropolis with all the many problems of labor and industry, housing and health, relief, education, transportation, etc., must be given large powers of self-government.
- (c) A new charter of labor's right to organize, strike and meet.
- (d) A democratic election law.

That the opinions we express here reflect those of the ever-growing progressive forces of democracy was demonstrated by the historical Illinois State Legislative Conference called in Springfield, the capital city, on May 31. Held during the final sessions of the legislature, it exerted a powerful weight to balance the course of legislation in the direction of progress and democracy.

Delegates numbered 225, representing some 225 organizations and per-

haps as high as 500,000 people. They came from all sections of the state and represented almost every type of organization—C.I.O., A. F. of L., teachers, farm, youth, health, unemployed, social service, religious and many others. A forward step in the history of the state was the joint participation of labor and agricultural organizations.

The conference was welcomed by the mayor of Springfield, and was addressed by Mayor Kelly of Chicago, Lieutenant-Governor John Stelle, and a number of state senators and representatives. Mayor Kelly in his talk progressed further as a staunch New Dealer. "It is not enough that our people should not starve," said the mayor on the matter of relief. "There should be some guarantee of the minimum essentials of health and decency that are a part of our American standard of living." Emphasizing the need for unity of farmer and city worker, the mayor said: "I must also be mindful of the fact that the farmer and the industrial worker must share in the liberties and opportunities of democracy. Both deserve the same safeguard against disease, crime and bottomless poverty. Both deserve the same rewards in free education, social relations and earning capacity."

Support of the principles of the New Deal rang out in all the keynote addresses of the day. Delegates approved or condemned many bills under consideration by the state legislature dealing with relief and social security, health, old age pensions, civil liberties, labor, agriculture, education, and constitutional and election reform. Particular stress was laid upon the necessity of appropriating

at least \$6,000,000 a month for relief purposes in Illinois.

The conference set up a continuations committee and voted that this committee contact similar organizations in other states and explore the possibility of a national legislative conference some time next year.

Without doubt this conference did much to crystallize a progressive bloc in the state legislature, which will emerge the more firmly as farmer, labor and city middle class unity is achieved back home by the democratic front.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND LEGISLATIVE WORK

It is clear that the starting point of legislative work is the neighborhood and the community. Here the people are rooted, here is where the legislator goes when he wants to know how his constituents feel on matters. A hundred and fifty years of experience have taught the political machines that no campaigning can be effective unless it is done on the basis of precinct and ward. Therefore the organization and methods of work of the Party must be studied to see if they are fitted to carry on effective legislative work and to enable the Party to play the important role in American political life that it must.

An examination of the Party structure in Chicago shows that too much of the center of gravity of our work still lies in the section and its apparatus and not enough in the ward branch and its apparatus. The present sections are not constituted on the basis of well defined economic and social areas, and they do not give concrete, day-to-day guidance to each in-

dividual branch. We have developed in the past few years in the branch of 50, 75 or 100 members a form of organization radically different from the old units of ten or fifteen, and yet we are attempting to meet the problems of giving leadership through a form of organization which arose to meet the needs of a Party organized in small units.

Today it has become imperative that the best forces of the Party be released for the task of giving daily organizational and political guidance to the ward organizations of the Party. Nine-tenths of our present section apparatus should be released for direct work in a Party branch. This is the guarantee that we shall build the Party in the communities as an integral organization of the people. Capable forces must be released who will educate and train a whole corps of political leaders for our branches and work jointly with this new leadership to meet, in the words of Comrade Browder, "the accumulation of unsolved problems of adjustment of the Party to its tasks and environment."

As we make the branches centers of live political discussion and activity, as we develop the understanding and ability of the branch organizers and branch executives, as we learn how to involve every individual Party member in political work, as we create branches which will eventually make possible the development of a body of real leaders in ward work, to that extent will we also find a tremendous surging forward of the democratic front which will be built on an indestructible basis of the unity of the people in the precincts and wards.

AFTER THE LIQUIDATED BALFOUR DECLARATION IN PALESTINE

BY M. WELNER

(Correspondence from Palestine)

THE Jewish settlement in Palestine has just been living through bitter, painful days—in the very midst of the spring month of May. And who knows whether, as a result of this, the future days will not be even more difficult and painful?

On the night of May 17, the Jewish settlement received, in deep sorrow, through the Jerusalem radio, the official “White Book” of the Chamberlain-Halifax-MacDonald government. The Balfour Declaration, which pointed toward Palestine as a National Home for the Jews, has passed away to the other world, where lie many documents and “National Homes” that sprang into being with the first World War and that have now disappeared with the newly approaching world war.

ZIONISTS BETRAYED BY CHAMBERLAIN'S
“WHITE BOOK”

The blow for the Jews in Palestine did not come of a sudden. For many days beforehand, the Jewish people knew that it was inevitable, that all the springs put into motion by the Zionist leadership in London, in Washington, as well as in Paris, to help in avoiding the decree, would

not help as they had helped on previous occasions. The present rulers in England, heavily enmeshed in their own entanglements, could not continue any longer with their two-faced game, with all its hypocritical words and promises for Jewish Zionists. In the dangerous situation that threatens the British Empire in the Mediterranean, the Chamberlain government, under pressure of the Arab masses in Palestine and of the Arab governments in the surrounding countries, has attempted to alleviate its predicament by throwing into the river all of its fake pledges and declarations, with their exaggerated hopes and dreams, including the Balfour Declaration. This plan of liquidation, born in London over half a year ago during the Munich days, has now come to light through the “White Book,” given forth on the night of May 17.

The new “White Book” contains no less of hypocrisy, and perhaps even more, than all the former pronouncements with regard to the Palestine question. The only difference is that here we have everything in reverse form; instead of promises to the Jews, there are here pledges to the Arabs,