

# The Situation in the U.S.A.

by **BRUCE MINTON**

(Washington Correspondent of the *New Masses*)

(By Cable)

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ONE result of President Roosevelt's Message to Congress on the need for legislation to hold farm prices in line and to meet the danger of inflation has been to return the initiative to the administration spokesmen in both Houses, Senate and House of Representatives. Not that the wilful minority has acquiesced quietly to the President's message. They have attempted to palm off "formulas" that would permit inflation and victimise labour. Rather than keep farm prices within reason the southern Bourbons have cooked up a mess that has encouraged further price rises in farm commodities. Concurrently professional labour baiters have raised hue and cry about wages, demanding that the workers' pay be frozen regardless of sub-standard levels that undermine efficiency and morale and thereby are impeding production.

President Roosevelt flatly rejected such formulas and reiterated his demand for effective legislation. Small and middle farmers have little interest in inflated prices. In fact, the high prices as envisaged by the Farm Bloc would injure the majority of farmers more than they would help them. It would work untold hardship on consumers. A rise in living costs would limit the market of small farm producers; they would be placed in danger of losing their land; and only the largest agricultural corporations and real estate speculators would benefit.

The plot to pervert the President's Message into an anti-Labour crusade has made little headway. As this is written the War Labour Board (the agency appointed by the President to handle Labour disputes, in particular demands for wage adjustments) has awarded increases in hourly wages to employees of General Motors engaged in building tanks, trucks and other war material. Previously a substantial increase had been granted to miners of non-ferrous metals who have for long been sufferers from sub-standard wages—and suffering to such a degree

that miners were migrating to other war jobs where conditions and pay were far more attractive. The supporters of the administration in Congress were able to prevent the most sweeping wage plans for the wage freezing. As matters stand the Congress will probably not disturb the War Labour Board's ample authority to stabilise wages—a far cry from freezing.

The leadership exercised by the President has been welcomed by the Labour Unions and by the people as a whole. Already too much time has been wasted in the changing over of American economy to wartime needs and to the all-out economy insisted upon by Earl Browder and by the Communist Party. Vacillation and hesitation have delayed production: responsible administration spokesmen admit that present production is far below industrial capacity and is perhaps only one half of the nation's potential. Donald Nelson, the chief of the War Production Board in charge of production and allocation of materials, has promised to get "tough." As yet it has not been indicated exactly what he intends to do and "dollar-a-year" members of the Production Board still maintain a leisurely pace that is too reminiscent of "business as usual."

To Nelson's credit, he at long last has conceded the importance of granting Labour a voice in production. He has asked the American Federation of Labour and the Congress of Industrial Organisations to nominate vice-chairmen to sit on a five-man-board working with the War Production Board in its industry and production sections. This pattern of co-operation and consultation will also extend to the regional offices. Philip Murray, the President of the Congress of Industrial Organisations, has hailed Nelson's acceptance of Labour representatives as the farthest development in drawing the Unions officially into the war effort.

Slowly American industry is being geared to the needs of total war, too slowly perhaps, but the momentum

mounts. The Unions and the people see this increased effort as a promise of our ability to maintain and expand the western front once opened. A substantial section of the American press is calling for a European bridgehead in force and has been waiting for it ever since Molotov visited Washington. Churchill's talks in Moscow and the President's definite intimation that offensive action can be looked for in Europe in the near future has led to a widespread expectation that the Second Front is about to be launched.

But Raymond Daniell, the London correspondent of the powerful *New York Times*, has just cabled a story (which was passed by the British Censor) pointing out that the British and American Governments have now decided that the Second Front this year is an impossibility. For months, Daniell has taken it upon himself to throw cold water on the Second Front agitation. His latest "semi-official" news story has been greedily seized upon by the appeasers. There is no doubt that an attempt will be made to use Daniell's despatch in order to discourage the pressure for offensive action. Yet it is well understood throughout the nation that for all the relief that is felt over the repulse dealt to Rommel, for all the pride and satisfaction over the recent gains in the Solomon Islands and in the Pacific Ocean—it is well understood that at Stalingrad and on the Eastern Front the war is in the balance.

The American Labour movement increasingly exerts pressure for the Second Front. The Unions are rapidly emerging as a powerful factor in the drive for victory. With a growing understanding of Labour's central rôle in the war effort the need becomes more pressing than ever to cement unity between the American Federation of Labour and the Congress of Industrial Organisations. No date as yet has been set for the first meeting of the Joint Committee to discuss Murray's recent unity proposals. But it is expected that the Conference will occur within a month.

Fully as important is the question of international Labour unity. Unfortun-

ately, the appeasers within the American Federation of Labour Executive Council—notably William Hutcheson (Carpenters), Matthew Woll (Photo-engravers), egged on by arch-defeatist John Lewis (President of the United Mine Workers)—have been able to prevent affiliation with the Anglo-Soviet Trade Union Committee. Sir Walter Citrine's negotiations here are now recognised to have been ineffectual, at best exceedingly inept. He delayed unity by pointedly refusing to discuss fraternal relations with the Congress of Industrial Organisations and the Railroad Brotherhoods. Citrine coldly dismissed every attempt to persuade him to a less insulting course. Through his attempts to make a "deal" exclusively with the American Federation of Labour, the Hutcheson clique within the Federation's Executive defeated President William Green's advocacy of affiliation and substituted a proposal for relations only with British Unions, excluding Soviet Unions from participation. Both Soviet Unions and Trades Union Congress reject this impertinent offer.

In this situation President Murray, of the Congress of Industrial Organisations, has sponsored a strongly worded resolution at the recent Congress of Industrial Organisations Executive calling for strengthened unity "within and among United Nations . . . in accordance with the experience of the united action already achieved between the British and Soviet Trade Unions."

Murray correctly insisted upon drawing in the Latin American Unions under the progressive leadership of Lombardo Toledano. Their inclusion would help to speed the war effort of our southern neighbours and would strengthen the growing Labour movements of such countries as Chile, Argentina and Brazil. The clarity of the Congress of Industrial Organisation's position will surely aid the pro-war majority of the American Federation of Labour to defeat the appeasers. In addition, any move that forwards Trade Union unity on a world scale only smooths the way to labour unity here at home.

# Soldiers' Pay and The Second Front

by GUNNER X-RAY

AT a time when the whole country is impatiently demanding a Second Front, and when the Forces equally with civilians are anxious for action, it is regrettable that the Government should choose to demonstrate its disregard for the demand for a substantial rise in servicemen's pay and allowances.

To-day, prior to our great offensive, is the time when the servicemen should once and for all be made to feel that they and their families are the first care of the nation. But the Government's attitude is only too reminiscent of their peace-time treatment of the unemployed.

In the debate in Parliament on September 10 it was made abundantly clear that the Members as a whole, irrespective of party, were completely dissatisfied with the meagre increases proposed by the Government. Apart from the two official Government spokesmen, Sir Stafford Cripps and Sir James Grigg, some 31 members made speeches in the debate. Of these, 29 were severely critical, the remaining two (Mr. Hely-Hutchinson and Major Sir E. Cadogan) were, in the words of Mr. J. J. Davidson, "the only Members to support the Government's proposals . . . in a tepid manner." Of the 29 who were critical, 17 represented the Services, including one naval rating, while Major Sir E. Cadogan was the only representative of the Services to support the Government's proposals.

The debate was preceded by the publication of that notorious White Paper, a document which was met with ridicule and ribaldry in the barrack-room, and received no better reception in Parliament. In the course of the debate it was variously described as a "Yellow Paper" (Major Profumo), "tendencious" (Miss Rathbone), "the worst piece of publicity that has been issued for a long time" (Mr. Beaumont), "utter and contemptible nonsense" (Mr. J. J. Davidson), "an atrocious document" (Major Wise), "a disgraceful piece of jiggery-pokery" (Capt. York), and "a tissue of lies" (Major Marlowe). This last gallant gentleman even suggested that the author should be strung up on a lamp-post!

In contrast to the White Paper the debate was a straight and honest statement of the grievances of servicemen to-day, with ample constructive proposals. If the Government had made the debate its starting-point, it could have formed a clear idea, based on the combined all-party views of Members, of what the country and services want.

But alas! The White Paper was already in print and the Government's proposals were already cut and dried. And the Government's own attitude during the debate was such that the penultimate speaker, Capt. York, was constrained to comment: "We have seen no sign from the Government that they have paid the least attention to what every serving Member of this House who has spoken to-day has said." So, instead of using Parliament as a Council of State, an unfortunate impression was created, and the Government has made necessary a further period of campaigning for the servicemen just at a time when unity for the Second Front, and not arguments over soldiers' pay, should be the order of the day.

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What are the main points that emerge from the debate?

First, there is the simple fact that the ordinary single private soldier has not enough pocket money to mix as an equal with civilian men or women, or with members of the Allied Forces. Still less can he entertain a girl, or afford to finance his own marriage. The addition of 6d. a day was generally condemned as inadequate, many Members would have been satisfied with a shilling, and a number of them showed how utterly misleading was the White Paper's estimate of the soldier's basic pay as being the equivalent of £3 a week to a civilian. Mr. W. Edwards, speaking as an ordinary rating, having allowed for stamps and cigarettes, showed how the ordinary ranker is left with approximately 1s. a day in his pocket.

Against this background the demand of W. Gallacher for a basic rate of 5s. a day seemed only reasonable, and was echoed in a milder form by Capt. York, with a proposal of 4s. a day, with 6s. after three years' service.