

no need for waiting. Somehow, Nate could not keep in mind that veterans shed blood on both sides at Centralia, Washington, in 1919. He thought of aluminum helmets, red puff-pants and brutal faces on parade. He thought of American Legion exhibitions of patriotism in California. He thought of W. W. Waters, his boots, his book and his "aides." He thought of resolutions calling for great vigilance (and vigilantes) against Communism. And sadly, he echoed a note that one still can hear among class conscious non-veterans: Those screwy veterans will all turn fascist.

To Nate it was a waste of time in 1933, before the Veterans' Rank & File Convention at Washington, D. C., to set up the Oregon Veterans' Liaison Committee, collect nickels and dimes to issue tens of thousands of leaflets analyzing what the Economy Act meant, and showing that dear Uncle Sam had no illusions about what class the rank and file veteran belonged to. When we saw, after the weeks of work, after using workers' dimes to pay for leaflets, the little group of veterans who started out from Oregon as a contingent of delegates, we wondered if Nate was right. Out of a big, state-wide conference, with delegates from V.F.W. (Veterans of Foreign Wars) posts, D.A.V. (Disabled American Veterans) chapters and Legion posts, that little group of men started out, less than sixty in all. It looked hopeless. The Wobbly, grinning cynically at the vindication of his defeatism, repeated that the veterans needed to starve "like other workers." Maybe they had a special way of starving. "The government ought to rescind the bonus. That's what's keepin' 'em scissorbills. They got a few lousy dollars dangling in front of 'em. That's all they can think of."

But that wasn't what the Oregon contingent—plain, rank and file veterans—was thinking of. Not entirely. They were starting out to deliver Uncle Sam and his advisory committee, the National Economy League, an ultimatum, that they as well as the other workers, farmers and veterans, were tired of hunger. They bummed their way to Washington, attended the convention, and scattered. Some returned to Oregon, to find the united front shattered and some of its elements saying: "Well, Roosevelt put over the Economy Act for the country's good. We hadn't ought to grumble. We have to make some sacrifice."

Again we were almost ready to give old Nate the benefit of the doubt. The American Legion convention was passing resolutions against Communism, while disabled veterans in t.b. hospitals, n.p. wards, soldiers' homes were committing suicide, and Congress juggled around with clauses and the Veterans' Administration used a fine-tooth comb to see if they could scrape another sliver off some disabled veterans' wooden leg. From California came rumblings of what the Legion was doing to live up to its resolution to defend Americanism. Meetings of the Friends of the Soviet Union were broken up by flag-waving gangsters. Workers felt the enthusiastic beating of patriotism on their heads at demonstrations.

In the state of Washington, the Legion was showing they could still fight for Wall Street. Yes, those tens of thousands of leaflets; those long hours of hard work—were all wasted. Only a relative handful of veterans would dig in and struggle for relief. The Commander in Chief—the Great White Father in Washington—would fix things up if the reds would only give him a chance.

But last fall the Chief of Police (he's a buddy, too,) issued an invitation to the American Legion to form a nice, country-loving reserve police force. He wanted 250 stalwart men with guts to handle demonstrations. After all, they had fought for this country. Did they want the reds to have it? When the issue was allowed to die a discreet death, only about 15 Legionnaires indicated that they gave a whoop. Well, maybe those leaflets weren't wasted, after all.

On May 9th, the longshoremen went out on strike. The Waterfront Employers let forth a blast of paid ads, telling what dirty dogs the longshoremen were. The newspapers co-operated with long editorials, telling how the American public was suffering because of the stubborn longshoremen. Portland has what is reputed to be the largest Legion post in the country. There are other Legion posts, too, and V.F.W. posts and a D.A.V. chapter. The newspapers called loudly that the strike was the work of reds, creating discontent and hiding behind the backs of the American workingman. But there was no answer from the Legion rank and file—except a resolution from Post No. 1 declaring that the Legion would not interfere in the strike! It was a formal announcement that the American Legion would not be used as striker-clubbers and strike-breakers.

Some months ago, obviously preparing for such an "emergency" as the longshoremen's and seamen's strike, the leadership of the Legion formed a state-wide "law enforcement committee." General George A. White, commander of the Oregon National Guard and regular army big-shot, was chairman of it. There were prominent attorneys, newspaper editors and publishers and businessmen. Of course, they weren't interested in Communists. Pooh! There weren't enough of them to worry about. No, sir—it was kidnaping and bank-wrecking that they were going to clean up on. (There has been no kidnaping in Oregon and the guilt for bank-wrecking is an ambiguous, controversial issue. They might have been out to get Hoover—but it is doubtful.) The law enforcement body of Legion leadership lived a short life (about three half-column spreads in the newspapers) and died a reticent death. I was talking to a Legionnaire about that time and I asked about this committee.

"Huh! They can't get away with that stuff—using the Legion to hide their reactionary feigning behind! They won't have any membership left," was his reply.

But the Chamber of Commerce, not to be defeated by a little stubbornness on the part of the rank and file Legionnaire, V.F.W., etc.,

recently started a new attempt at building a fascist battering ram to break the longshoremen's and seamen's strike. Patterned after "similar organizations in California," a "Citizens' Emergency League" was formed. Prominent Chamber of Commerce men make up the executive committee. Henry Cabell, wealthy Oregonian and member of the C. of C.'s military affairs committee; Sammonds, big corporation head (Iron Fireman); Freck, printer and engraver business, and Legion leadership; Kenneth Cooper, formerly regional manager of the Veterans' Bureau here (until driven out by the resenting veterans). And of course, they had no concern with the strike, either. They were just getting ready to answer the call of the regular law enforcement bodies in case of emergency. A thousand members were recruited according to reports given out recently. Now anyone would think that the American Legion, V.F.W., etc., were joining *en masse*. But—two posts of the Legion have already gone on record in opposition to the Emergency League. A V.F.W. post has done the same, and is out investigating the outfit. They asked Captain Aird, "in command" of the League, some embarrassing questions. Was it not true the Chamber of Commerce contributed a fund of \$20,000 to finance this self-sacrificing body? If not, where did they get their funds to start off with such a bang? Weren't there enough law enforcement bodies in Oregon—emergency and otherwise? You say you have no interest in the strike—then what th' hell are you organizing for?

Well, as to the last question . . . just in case the Mayor or the Governor calls on us. Oh—in other words, the Citizens' Emergency League is a pure and simple fascist organization.

Something desperate has happened to the spirit of 1919. Neither the workers nor the industrialists can count on the rank and file Legionnaire turning Fascist. There are no Legionnaires strutting around the water-front, looking for a Communist to bat on the head. There are no fife and drum corps rallying the citizenry of Portland to defend the employers' interests against the militant strikers. It's enough to make you cry to see veteran posts going on record against being used by the Chamber of Commerce and the Waterfront Employers. It's enough to make Hamilton Fish tear his hair (if he is still in the hair-tearing business) to talk to rank and filers of the Legion and hear them tell the strikers to go to it, and by God! I hope you win! Yes—and it's simply blood-curdling the way veteran posts in Portland are sending delegates to the Conference Against War and Fascism. The drums that beat in 1919 are busted. . . . There is a bigger drum that has grown in volume during the past five years, and the veterans—those screwy veterans who always fight on the side of the boss—are marching to it.

I hope old Nate reads this. Perhaps it will temper his long-suffering hatred with hope. Perhaps it will add a dash of courage to the bitterness that spreads over his face.

# Maneuvering for Position

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**T**HE main recent political events in Britain have been occasioned by an intense activity and enormous expenditure of funds by the Mosley Fascists.

It is now clearer than ever that the great Olympia meeting marked a distinct setback for Mosley. The counter-activity developed by the London working class was considerably greater than either he or the ordinary Conservatives expected. Moreover, this activity was developed wholly under the leadership of the London Communist Party. The result appears to have been that the British governing class, surveying the situation, has as yet by no means made up its mind that it is necessary or advisable to change over to an open Fascist basis.

Naturally, that possibility is always in its mind, but at present it feels that it has still a good deal to gain by keeping up Democratic forms. Mr. Baldwin, as ever by far the most important leader of the governing class forces, has strongly attacked Fascism in several recent speeches. He evidently feels that the perceptible revival in the economic situation allows for further Democratic maneuvers.

On the other hand, the Conservative Party is determined to show the governing class that there is no need to employ Mosley and his crude methods. The Conservative Party believes that it itself is quite capable of doing the job of building up a Fascist regime in this country by gradualist methods. The most important step in this direction is the Incitement to Disaffection Bill, which makes fundamental changes in British common law practice. The amount of United Front opposition which has arisen to this Bill is decidedly gratifying. A successful United Front demonstration, organized by a new body called the Council of Civil Liberties, was held in Trafalgar Square last Sunday. The London Trades Council, which is an important official Labor Party body, together with the London Communist Party, the Anti-War Movement, and several middle-class organizations — Quakers, Teachers' Associations, etc.—participated in this demonstration. It seems possible that when the capitalist class is forced to drive openly to Fascism, as it has been in France, it will encounter here also those formidable symptoms of mass resistance which are giving the French Fascists so much trouble.

However, once again the internal British situation is almost wholly dominated by the far more rapid development of events abroad. Thus the question of whether the British capitalists go over to an *openly* Fascist regime probably depends not so much on their present internal calculations as on the fate of the

Nazis. German Fascism is so rapidly and visibly weakening that this fact dominates the whole European situation. We must not, of course, delude ourselves by supposing that this fact gives in itself any guarantee of an immediate German revolution and the establishment of a Soviet Germany. Even if Hitler does fall, it is probable that the next phase will be an open Reichstag military dictatorship. But this would be an immense gain, for it would go far to remove the remaining elements of mass support which are the real obstacle to the overthrow of Hitler.

Moreover, it is by no means clear, of course, that things will go even as far as this in the immediate future. Hitler is maneuvering desperately in order to shunt his movement, with himself still at the head, over to more openly conservative lines. Many competent observers think that the most likely development is a driving out of the Nazi Left and the consolidation of a Hitler-Goering-Papen triumvirate ruling more openly in the name of land owners and capitalists even than does the present regime.

This, however, is all speculation; but the weakening of the Nazis has already had profound effects in Europe. It is clear that the French capitalists, in spite of their acute internal weakness, are regaining much of that control over the European situation which they lost during 1933 and in the early months of this year. The pro-Versailles Treaty bloc is visibly re-forming in Europe. Hitler turns desperately this way and that for allies, but he gets the most equivocal cooperation from Mussolini alone (whose internal difficulties are, in the opinion of many qualified observers, the most serious of all).

The weakening of the Nazis has relieved the minds of the British capitalists of any threat of immediate attack from Germany. This has not prevented them from doubling the British Air Force, but it has undoubtedly diminished the signs of alarm which were so apparent a few months ago. This I believe to be the real explanation of the sudden and dramatic worsening of Anglo-American relations. The British capitalists, feeling easy about the European position, feeling that France and her allies can well take care of the German danger, have felt freer to face outwards against their Western antagonist, American Imperialism.

Anti-American feeling in British governing class circles cannot be exaggerated. The debt default, and the embarrassment which this has caused to the British capitalists in their attempts to collect their German loans have but brought their suppressed irritation to a head. All over the world the British capital-

ists more and more discover that they are face to face with American rivalry.

It is in order to meet this situation that a new and vitally important orientation of British policy in the Far East, I understand, is about to be inaugurated. A very close understanding with Japan has been reached by the British Government. This means, in fact, though not in form, the renewal of the old Anglo-Japanese Alliance. It is said, however (though this, no doubt, must be treated with the utmost caution), that the new alliance is not on the basis of a Japanese attack on the Soviet Union. It is said to be, on the contrary, on the basis of a recognition of Japan's prior claim throughout China. China is to become a Japanese protectorate, but on the understanding that British commercial interests there are not too ruthlessly sacrificed. It is American interests which are to suffer primarily. In return for this measure of British cooperation, the Japanese are to cease casting covetous eyes upon India. The full "point," as the diplomats say, of the new Japanese *rapprochement* will, no doubt, be felt (it is, indeed, beginning to be felt already) in the negotiations on the new Naval Treaty.

In general, it may be said that the basic antagonism of the modern world, the rivalry between the two greatest capitalist Empires, Britain and America, is, after a period of apparent latency, coming sharply to the forefront. At any time, no doubt, Europe may blow up, and the explosion there may seem to overshadow Anglo-American rivalry. But European antagonisms themselves might well, had we all the necessary information, prove to be but expressions of Anglo-American rivalry. The investments interests of America and Britain in Europe criss-cross in a bewildering fashion; but Mussolini and Italy, at any rate, are probably so dependent upon America as to be regarded as an American sphere of influence; the same may become true of Germany.

Meanwhile, behind and above this incredibly tangled and swiftly moving world situation, in which the great powers maneuver desperately for position, there is felt the growing strength of the U.S.S.R. This, and the presence within every capitalist state of an organized and internationally unified revolutionary movement, is the fundamental difference between the present situation and the 1904-14 decade. It is a difference which will utterly change the character of the new war if it comes. It is a difference which enables us to feel confident that, for whatever sacrifices, the next war will not result in the triumph of this capitalist group or that, but in the overthrow of Capitalism in wide areas of the world.