

tant workers, but the 20-day strike of the United Auto Workers shows a tremendous increase of strength and class consciousness on the part of a huge body of workers hitherto practically unorganized. The morning after Dillon's sell-out (which William Green promptly approved) picketing was resumed in Toledo and maintenance men didn't get to their jobs.

Wallace Turns "Left"

ON APRIL 20 the Secretary of Agriculture claimed a mighty stride to the left in a press release headed "Minimum wages set for sugar beet field labor in four western areas." This straddle turns out to be the result of collaboration between the government and the Great Western Sugar Refining Company—ruler of the western dynasty of beet sugar production. Beet workers and their families contract to thin, top and harvest beets at so much

per acre per season. At public hearings recently held in the field, workers were demanding from \$23 to \$27 an acre. This meant \$250 to \$300 per family per year. Angered by the growers' offers of from \$17 to \$19 an acre and disillusioned by former sell-outs, the exploited workers threatened strike. The Department of Agriculture, counselling "patience" and "cooperation," hesitated to come in and set rates for fear of offending the growers. Then the President of the Great Western Sugar Company stepped forward. Calling the Sugar Section on the phone, he pointed out the advantages of setting wages. First, this will prevent strikes by permanently committing workers to a low wage. Second, it will avoid awkward questions of hours and child slavery. Third, it will permit control of these advantages by withholding payments "to insure the faithful performance of the contract."

THE Sugar Section agreed with the Great Western Sugar Company to take this militant step to the "left" in the interest of the workers. It also tactfully asked the Company what rates it thought just. The reply was \$17.50 (Southern Colorado), \$19.50 (Northern Colorado, Nebraska and Wyoming) and \$21.50 (Montana and Wyoming). By a strange coincidence these became the figures which Wallace announced April 20. They are slightly higher than those paid in 1934—and much lower than those paid in 1928-29 when sugar was selling at the same price as this year. These rates mean permanent low-grade standards of living—child labor, peonage through the withholding of wages, greatly increased difficulties in organizing farm workers. Yet elated liberals pat their tummies down in Washington, and chalk up another "leftward" step for the greater glory of Roosevelt.

Sabotaging the Bonus

TO VETO the bonus bill or not to veto it—this was one of the major dilemmas facing the autocrat of the White House breakfast table over the week end. It was indicated that he would veto it: whether the veto would be sustained in the Senate was uncertain.

It is hardly necessary to say that THE NEW MASSES considers the utterances and actions of the official American Legion leaders in connection with the bonus issue beneath contempt. They not only made no protest when the rank and file bonus marchers were driven from Washington by fire and sword but approved of the atrocities inflicted on the veterans and their dependents by Chief of Staff General MacArthur—the swivel chair artist who is the petted darling of Washington society—and the Hoover administration. These leaders organize fascist vigilante attacks on workers who support the bonus demands. But for the rank and file of the former members of the national army that was recruited "to make the world safe for democracy" the immediate payment of the bonus is a living issue—to many actually a matter of life and death.

The consistent refusal of the Roosevelt administration to establish federal unemployment insurance, the cruel in-

adequacy of the public works program, the housing program that was supposed to provide several millions with jobs but which has to date built only some 180 dwellings, the cutting of the wages of relief workers on public projects to \$12 per week, and the steady decline in industrial production, have combined to bring the bonus payment issue again to the forefront in the minds of hundreds of thousands of veterans. They see it as a temporary way out of the destitution and humiliation to which they are subjected by the various relief agencies.

The munitions investigation conducted by the Nye committee, in spite of administration sabotage and the crawling timidity of committee members when faced by buccaneers of the Baruch and du Pont type, proved, if it proved nothing else, that the main opponents of the immediate payment of the bonus are those individuals and monopolistic corporations who made world war into the most profitable business enterprise of the century—and who are now preparing a new war.

On the other hand, there are those "friends" of the veterans like Coughlin, Long, Thomas of Oklahoma, Wheeler of Montana, Patman of Texas, etc., advocates of inflation by remonetization of silver or by additional

paper currency issues, or both, who are willing to give the veterans their back pay at once but in a dollar whose purchasing power will be lowered so much by inflation that no one can now predict the exact low level to which it will drop.

Eccles, governor of the Federal Reserve Board, and Jones, head of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, if one is to judge by their recently reported remarks, are in favor of payment of the bonus—by inflation. The statements in favor of the bonus payment by these two important cogs in the administration are an indication of the tremendous popular pressure for the bonus.

Two billion dollars additional currency—the amount that it was proposed to issue to pay off the veterans—would have sent rapidly rising prices skyrocketing and put another huge burden on the bowed backs of the working people of this country. There can be no question that big banking circles already had a scheme worked out by which financiers would cash in on the bonus payment in the way proposed.

There is only one way to pay off the veterans and put the burden where it belongs—on those multi-millionaires and the giant trusts they control: Turn over the war appropriations—already

around the billion dollar mark—to unemployment insurance and the bonus; by the most drastic taxation of those individuals and corporations who made billions out of the last war.

What would Roosevelt do? The coterie of slippery schemers of reaction

he gathered around him for consultation last weekend — consisting of Speaker of the House Byrns, Vice-President Garner, Postmaster General Farley, Senator Robinson of Arkansas, Harrison of Mississippi—gave the answer: Roosevelt would smile—and

sabotage the bonus legislation. The guarantee for the payment of the bonus in a form that will relieve poverty-stricken veterans lies in their unity with the unemployed and the labor movement, in joint mass action for their demands.

The Supreme Court Says "No"

THE Supreme Court on May 6 by a five to four decision threw out the Railroad Retirement Act, declaring that Congress had no constitutional right to pass a law making pensions for aged railroad workers compulsory. The law, which was passed in June, 1934 as a result of widespread pressure, provided a retirement and pension system for all railroads subject to the Interstate Commerce Act. Pensions averaging \$61 per month were to be paid out of a fund raised by contributions of 2 percent of pay from employes and double that amount from the companies. Retirement age was set at sixty-five. The adverse decision affects more than a million workers in 134 railroads, two express companies and the Pullman Company.

In its findings, the majority of the court made no pretense of concealing its class bias. Mr. Justice Roberts, author of this document, said it was an "unwarranted extension" of the Constitutional clause permitting the regulation of interstate commerce by Congress, "to utilize it for the improvement of morale among rail employes." "We cannot agree," the decision states, "that these ends [the security of workers in old age], if dictated by statute and not voluntarily extended by the employer, encourage loyalty and continuity of service." To "substitute legislative largess for private bounty" would not make for loyalty and continuity of service, because "gratitude to the employer" would disappear.

The minority decision gave an opportunity to Chief Justice Hughes to pose as the workingman's friend. The "liberal" element of the court is supporting the Roosevelt administration, in the hope of minimizing mass resistance to policies that lead straight to fascism. Justice Hughes has experienced the power of mass protest. Recently the court has yielded four times to it in granting two Scottsboro hearings, the hearing on Angelo Herndon and the

gesture in favor of Tom Mooney. Chief Justice Hughes is becoming sensitive. He therefore delivers himself of an indignant rebuttal.

Supporting, by a lengthy argument, the constitutionality of the compensation acts, he says: "When we go to the heart of the matter we find that compensation and pension measures rest upon similar basic considerations," and "the fundamental consideration which supports this type of legislation is that industry should take care of its human wastage, whether it is due to accident or not."

How much the Supreme Court has been interested in "human wastage" may be shown by the barest examination of its decisions. In no case involving any important industrial question has the court ruled in favor of labor. Here are some of its major positions on the rights of workers:

It has upheld convictions in criminal syndicalism cases (Gitlow and Whitney) and declared that states might constitutionally enact legislation limiting free speech.

It has found a statute in New York State unconstitutional because it limited work in bakeshops to ten hours a day.

It held that minimum wages could not be fixed by states, and child labor could not be prohibited.

It sustained sweeping injunctions against labor on the ground of interference with state commerce; it has held that a union had no right to make a rule prohibiting work on non-union material on the same ground (in the railway decision just rendered where the employers are favored, the court stated that pensions had no relation to interstate commerce).

It declared, in the Hitchman Case in West Virginia, that there was no such thing as peaceful picketing.

It construed the Clayton Act in such a way that the Act—hailed by the A. F. of L. as the charter of labor—became a new ground for granting

labor injunctions; when Kansas passed a law identical with the Clayton Act, the court declared it unconstitutional.

In the first Scottsboro decision it held that a defendant had a right to counsel; in the second it held that a Negro had a right to be tried by a jury drawn from rolls on which Negro names appeared; neither decision did anything to prevent discrimination against Negroes.

On the day it decided the second Scottsboro case, the court gave the Democratic Party power to exclude Negroes from voting at its primaries.

This is the labor-hating record of the Supreme Court. Again and again favorable legislation wrested from the states and from Congress by organized workers has been blocked by a majority of one. On the other hand, in the face of determined mass demands, the court has backed down. It sustained the Adamson eight-hour-day provision, which was passed under the threat of a railway strike.

Justice Hughes' objection to the Railroad Retirement Act was that it was not a "reasonably conceived" pension bill. Such a bill he inferred might be constitutional even to the reactionaries of the court. But by "reasonably conceived" the Chief Justice means a measure that will permit industry to contest successfully every individual pension case, as it has done from the beginning in compensation cases. Roosevelt, in signing the law which has just been scrapped, said that it was "crudely drawn," but it is obviously a part of the New Deal's demagoguery to secure some sort of a rail pension law and silence the urgent demands of the Brotherhoods and rank and file rail workers. The Supreme Court consists of nine worried old men. The millions left insecure and at the mercy of "employers' bounty" by this decision can keep on worrying them until they sustain retirement pensions that can be enforced in practice.