

Wagner's Anti-Labor Bill

THE contention of President Green of the A. F. of L. and other "labor leaders" that the Wagner Labor Disputes Bill has not the approval of the Roosevelt administration—that it is something separate and apart from the N.R.A. anti-labor setup—that the bill is to the "left" of N.R.A. and the administration policy in general—has been pretty well blasted by recent developments inside the A. F. of L. and its affiliated organizations.

The call sent out by the New York Central Labor Council for the mass meeting in Madison Square Garden on May 23, preceded by what is actually, although not so stated in the official call, a strike of one or two hours duration, puts the A. F. of L. officialdom squarely behind "the N.R.A., the Wagner Labor Dispute Bill and the thirty-hour week (the Black Bill)." (New York World-Telegram for May 16.)

This call to union members to strike, meet and demonstrate for reactionary features of N.R.A. and N.R.A. as a whole shows an intertwining of A. F. of L. officialdom with the government in a fascist network that will paralyze the labor movement if not exposed, checked and defeated.

The Wagner Bill is a second line of defense of the N.R.A. anti-labor and anti-union supporters and the elaborate machinery they have organized for confusing, halting and demoralizing all mass movements for genuine unionism, and for improvements in wages and working conditions. Recent experiences of workers in steel, aluminum, auto parts and textile have shown these purposes more clearly than ever before.

The Wagner Bill does not abolish company unions. Under its provisions, the Board which it authorizes—to be appointed by the President—has the sole authority to decide what union, A. F. of L., independent or company dominated union, shall be recognized. The Bill places new and far-reaching powers in hands of Federal District Courts in enforcing the board's "inquiries" into labor disputes.

Senator Wagner has admitted during the hearings on the bill that it does not outlaw company unionism. He admits freely that it is intended to prevent and stop strikes that "interfere with or obstruct the free flow of interstate commerce." Furthermore, in a recent con-

troversy with Senator Walsh of Massachusetts (contained in the published proceedings of the Senate Committee on Education and Labor) Senator Wagner interpreted the language of his bill as applying even to strikes of building service workers—such as the recent New York strike. Coupled with the recent decision of the United States Supreme Court on the Railway Pension Act—slamming the door on *all* social legislation of this character—the Wagner Bill is an unmistakable indication of the rapid trend toward fascist reaction in administration circles. No worker should be fooled by the fact that Senator Wagner and A. F. of L. top leaders widely advertise the purported opposition of many powerful employers to the bill. These same people and corporations opposed Clause 7a. Some of them believe that they have enough guarantees from the government *now* to take care of militant labor organizations. They do not even want any more illusions among workers. But, as all history shows, this is not the first time that advisors of capitalists have shown themselves more astute than the actual rulers.

The position of the Communist Party—and the rank and file movement throughout the country for that matter

(the New York section of the American Newspaper Guild and other labor organizations have taken the same stand in principle)—was made clear to the Senate Committee on Education and Labor at its concluding hearings by William F. Dunne. The Party demanded:

1. The immediate enactment of the Workers' Unemployment and Social Insurance Bill—the so-called Lundeen Bill H. R. 2827.

2. Declaring illegal company unions, and any and all forms of so-called "employee representation."

3. Declaring that the right of workers to organize freely in unions of their choice, without intimidation or coercion by employers and their agents, shall be inviolate.

- (a) Specially legalizing the right to strike.

4. Specifically declaring illegal the use of the "blacklist" for the purpose of intimidating workers and preventing union organization or other forms of labor activity.

5. Declaring illegal any interference by employers, their associations or agents with workers' rights of free speech, free press and free assemblage.

6. Declaring specifically that the provisions above shall apply without discrimination to all working people regardless of occupation, sex, race, nationality, religious and political opinion.

7. Specifically declaring illegal any discrimination by employers against Negro workers in the matter of employment, wages and working conditions.

Farmers in Washington

TWO farmer delegations came to Washington last week, to tell the capital what they thought about the Agricultural Adjustment Administration. The first, 4,000 strong, came in Pullman cars and banqueted at the Mayflower Hotel. Well-to-do farmers who had fattened on crop-reduction checks, they were here to make sure they continued getting theirs. President Roosevelt received them, Chester C. Davis, A.A.A. administrator, posed for photographers with his arm round the shoulder of chief big-farmer Edward O'Neill of Alabama.

The second group arrived in three automobiles, fourteen poorly dressed men and women representing the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union and the Sharecroppers' Union, with membership extending over ten southern states. More than half were Negroes. Some

of them were in Washington for the third time seeking government action to alleviate their desperate plight, made more desperate by introduction of the cotton reduction program.

They put up, not at the best hotels, but at the homes of sympathizers. Instead of being welcomed on the White House lawn as was the first group, they picketed the Department of Agriculture with signs that read, "We're in rags because we raised too much cotton." "A.A.A. made it worse," "How About the Myers Report?"

President Roosevelt, who a few days before had told the rich farmers that critics of A.A.A. were liars and implied that they represented the high and mighty, had no time to see these sharecroppers and evicted farmers.

Chester C. Davis received them in a conference which (like the subsequent

ones) was not open to the press. Arkansas sharecroppers, asked him why A.A.A. had suppressed the report of its own investigator Mary Conner Myers who revealed conditions in Arkansas "worse than in Belgium during the famine."

"That was just an investigation of incidents looking toward legal action," said Davis. But he was unable to cite any instance where legal action had been used to force plantation owners to pay the penalties specified by law for violation of cotton-reduction contracts.

"The federal government has no responsibility for enforcing civil liberties." This was Under-Secretary of Agriculture Tugwell's answer when several grey-haired delegates told him they had been driven from their homes by plantation bosses' night riders. One Negro of sixty-seven wore his arm in a sling, paralyzed by a stroke which followed a two-day flight from home. He kept repeating "I've got no place to go."

Neither has the governor of Arkansas such responsibility nor local officials to whom union members have gone for protection from the terror (unleashed since Washington's tacit approval of suppression of the Myers report).

Ward Rodgers, Arkansas school teacher sentenced to six months' imprisonment for activities as organizer for the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union, wanted to know where sharecroppers could turn for their rights. Tugwell didn't know. "Don't come to men like me who know your troubles and sympathize," said Tugwell, "go to Robinson and Bankhead and get them to frame legislation that will protect you."

Sharecropper delegates are demanding that the pending Bankhead Bill be amended to make it illegal to attach crop-reduction checks or to assign them to others for payment. Such practice now makes widespread the situation in which tenant farmers never see their cotton-reduction checks, but are forced to sign papers turning them over to plantation owners. The delegation also demands that the new bill guarantee them a decent standard of living and the right to organize into unions of their own choosing.

The sharecroppers are telling their troubles to Miller, chief of the Complaint Section of the Cotton Section of the A.A.A. On the basis of past experience, however, they expect little help from officialdom. "We Negroes and whites have got to organize together to fight for our rights," they say.

Youth in Action

THE exposé by James King in this issue of the sinister schemings of "American Youth Congress, Inc." is instructive and revealing. It should be remembered that the Louisville venture was the fourth attempt to form a mass fascist youth movement. Similar attempts were made by the same clique in New York, in New Brunswick, in Davenport. Each time the progressive youth administered a sound trouncing to the youthful disciples of Hearst and Macfadden.

But the activity of the anti-fascist youth has not been confined to the work of defeating the fascists on their own chosen battlefields. Out of Viola Ilma's ill-fated First American Youth Congress there developed a genuine united front youth movement—the American Youth Congress, which has spread over the United States with the undoubted power of a great mass movement.

Much has been done by the American Youth Congress toward uniting the most diverse types of youth organizations around a clear cut and positive program on the questions confronting the young generation: war, fascism, unemployment, industry, education, Negro rights.

Since last August, when Ilma was defeated in New York by a united front of Socialist, Communist, religious and "conservative" youth, the American Youth Congress movement has dug roots in many cities. Local continuations committees of the American Youth Congress have been set up in New York City, Rochester, Schenectady, Buffalo, Albany, Newark, Patterson, New Haven, Hartford, Providence, Boston, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Macoupin County (Ill.), Detroit, Minneapolis, Duluth, St. Louis, Milwaukee, Louisville, San Francisco and Los Angeles.

In the nine months of its existence, the American Youth Congress has become a social and political force. It has to its credit the memorable National Youth Conference in Washington, attended by over 250 delegates, representing 600,000 youth from all parts of the country. This conference besieged President Roosevelt, Robert Fechner of C.C.C. fame, and various state representatives and senators with delegations demanding enactment of H. R. 2827.

It was one of the participating or-

ganizations which issued the call for, and helped carry through, the impressive student strike against war on April 12 together with the Student League for Industrial Democracy, the National Student League, the Methodist Youth Council and the Youth Section of the American League Against War and Fascism. Now it is organizing parades and demonstrations against war and fascism for May 30, Memorial Day—in over fifty cities by current count. It is estimated that in New York City alone, upward of 35,000 will parade and demonstrate.

Probably the most ambitious undertaking of the American Youth Congress is its Second American Youth Congress, to be held in Detroit on July 4, 5, 6, 7. Preparations are under way now to bring 2,000 representatives of organized youth to this Congress to summarize the accomplishments of the American Youth Congress movement in the past year, to discuss the program adopted at the First Congress in the light of new developments and the actions recorded above, to clothe the movement in the organizational forms demanded by its rapid growth and influence and to adopt on this basis a Declaration of the Rights of American Youth. The first draft of this Declaration of Rights will be read at a torchlight mass meeting in Detroit on the evening of July 4.

The powers that be are fearful of the strength and potentialities of the American Youth Congress movement in the struggle against growing fascist tendencies. As an opening counterblast the Detroit Board of Education has refused the Arrangements Committee of the Congress the use of Cass Technical High School auditorium for the sessions of the Congress. Protests at this arbitrary denial should at once be forwarded to Mr. Cody, President of the Board of Education, Detroit, Michigan.

Those interested in further details of this Congress may communicate with Waldo McNutt, Chairman of the National Continuations Committee of the American Youth Congress at 112 East 19th Street, New York, or with Marion Gilpin, chairman of the Detroit Arrangements Committee for the Second American Youth Congress, at the Hotel Statler, Room 248, Detroit.