

"Mrs. Roosevelt Will Not Speak"

A Report on the Fascist Youth Conference in Louisville

JAMES KING

ON FRIDAY and Saturday, April 19 and 20, there was held in Louisville, Ky., a conference of the American Youth Congress, Inc., Southern Division. On the Advisory Board of this organization, the first name is that of Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt. The second is that of Mr. Bernarr Macfadden. The keynote speech for the conference was nationally broadcast by Attorney General Homer Cummings. The whole appeal for the American Youth Congress, Inc. (don't overlook that "Inc.") coincides with a campaign now being waged by the Hearst press.

Also on the Advisory Board are:

The Governors of Kentucky, South Carolina, Oklahoma, Mississippi, Indiana and North Carolina.

Members of the faculties of the Universities of South Carolina, Tennessee, Missouri, Alabama, Florida and Mississippi, Vanderbilt College, Florida College for Women, Rutgers and Centre Colleges.

Among the originally scheduled speakers were Mrs. Roosevelt, Edgar Hoover, head of the Criminal Investigation Division of the Department of Justice, Dr. Walter E. Myer of the Civic Education Service and Mr. Bernarr Macfadden. (Drastic and unexpected changes occurred in the list of speakers.)

Let us have a look at this Conference, sponsored by the President's wife, and see what were the aims and scope of the projected movement, the principles on which it was based and the methods employed to get it under way.

I have here a leaflet written by Samuel Mines, the executive secretary of the American Youth Congress, Inc. The following quotations are from it:

In its best sense, the word "congress" implies a gathering of minds—an assembly of purpose. . . . youth has a special set of problems . . . [they] must apply themselves to find their own cure.

When the unemployed in the United States passed the ten million mark, it could no longer be said that anyone who really wanted a job could have one. [By writing to Room 802, 1775 Broadway, New York, the reader can secure a copy and convince himself that the above is a quotation, and not a joke. J. K.]

There follows the information that the economic system is out of gear; that youth faces a future of unemployment in a system "so saturated that it could no longer absorb them." Then this:

It is easy to start a movement by whipping up an emotional frenzy, by a flood of slogans, arm-bands, flags—by hatred and excitement and

violence . . . in America, we want no regimentation, no reign of terror.

And this:

A youth movement in America must be American in principle. Hence the American Youth Congress. No dictators, no "Fuehrers." Instead, an elected group with equal powers, chosen for fair and balanced representation.

The leaflet goes on to explain that after the Congress at New York University, in August, 1934 (of which more later), an advisory board of older people was selected; for, "While being idealistic it is just as well to be practical." This board has already been referred to. And I may add that Mr. Mines is quite right. Distinctly, this set-up is "practical" rather than "idealistic." Of Macfadden, Mr. Mines lyrically writes that he ". . . for many years had been experimenting with self-sufficiency projects for youth, and . . . had the vision to back the

first feeble efforts on the part of youth to become self-supporting and self-respecting."

With respect to any sort of a plan of action, Mr. Mines says no word. The printed program for the Louisville Conference, however, is somewhat more explicit. As solutions for the present plight of youth, it proposes mainly the following:

1. A system of apprenticeships.
2. The C.C.C. program.
3. "Opportunities through varied farming and agricultural experiments." That is to say, subsistence projects.

These are the concrete proposals. The rest is wind. (Y.M.C.A.; 4-H Clubs; recreational and educational programs; and similar bilge.)

LET US now examine the methods employed to build up the Louisville Conference. In this connection, it will be nec-

Join the Fascist "Youth Congress" And Become a Kentucky Colonel

STATEMENT OF LOUIS H. LAUKHUF

Commonwealth Of Kentucky
County Of Jefferson.

I, Louis H. Laukhuf am 24 years old, a student of the University of Louisville, and affirm the following:

On April 15, 1935, Colonel Beatty who gave me to understand that he was acting for William E. Porter, who in turn represents Bernarr Macfadden, asked me if I would act as a delegate from another university at the Youth Congress. This other University was to be one which I had presumably attended but was not now enrolled in. He offered me and others who would be willing to do the same thing an invitation to the dinner to be given by Governor Laffoon at the Brown Hotel and also two tickets to the meeting of the Congress. A further condition was that I was to make a written statement saying that I would represent such a University that I was not then attending. This I declined to do because even if I had once been a student in another University I would now have no right to pose as its representative. He asked me to give the name of other students at the University of Louisville who could be used in this fashion. This too I declined to do.

Colonel Beatty also offered me the possibility of a Kentucky Colonelcy in return for agreeing to pose as a delegate from a University which I was not attending.

(Signed) Louis H. Laukhuf

Subscribed and sworn to before me this April 15, 1935. My commission expires August 24, 1937. George J. Gibson Jr. Notary Public, Jefferson County Kentucky.

essary first briefly to review the Congress of 1934, over which Mr. Mines skims so lightly. Readers of THE NEW MASSES will remember that this Congress was called by Viola Ilma. Those not familiar with her history will do well to look up the issue of THE NEW MASSES of Nov. 13, 1934, in which John Spivak exposed her connections with agents of the Hitler government, and proved that she attempted the formation of a youth group along definitely fascist lines.

At the 1934 Congress, Miss Ilma called together representatives of various groups, and tried to push her program down their throats. But the delegates refused to take it. They organized a united front opposition on the floor; and Ilma, with about thirty followers, had to bolt her own convention, screaming "Reds." The delegates thereupon proceeded to hold a real meeting and organized the American Youth Congress. Ilma and her gang set themselves up on paper, using the same name. This group has subsequently incorporated itself, which is why I have been careful to keep the "Inc." in the title.

It is, therefore, with the incorporated group of neo-fascists that we are here dealing. (Ilma has been dropped.) It is they who "selected" the Advisory Board. It is they who organized the Louisville conference. It is they who sent W. E. Porter and Malcolm J. Freeborn to run the show.

Between the Congress of 1934 and the Louisville Conference of 1935 there are only three points of difference. First: Ilma has been so thoroughly discredited that now not even the American Legion dares to use her. Second: the program advanced at Louisville is a more frankly fascist program than that brought forward in New York. Third: the forces now openly coming forward for this group are far more fascist and far more aggressive than those which in New York attempted to remain in the background. With the advent of Macfadden (pornographer, jingo and Red-baiter), with the acquisition of Chaillaux (who has just finished pushing through the Indiana legislature a bill disfranchising radical and militant minorities, and who made in Indianapolis a vicious attack upon the Methodist Church, the Y.W.C.A. and DePauw University as hotbeds of Communism)—with the arrival of these individuals, the program takes on, with great distinctness, its proper perspective.

Preventing Crime

FOR some while before the opening of the conference, a quiet investigation was carried on in Louisville, directed by Dr. Ellis Freeman of the University of Louisville. Dr. Freeman secured certain affidavits, reproduced with this article. The first affidavit, a statement by nineteen-year-old Clifford Wright of Louisville, declares that after reading The Herald-Post he went to see William E. Porter. Wright told Porter that he had been offered and had declined a

job to steal an automobile. Porter, in the presence of a reporter from The Herald-Post, urged young Wright to renew the contact so that the automobile theft ring could be exposed "as an example of the work of the American Youth Congress." Porter proposed that Wright steal the car, a new Ford, replace the Kentucky license plates with Illinois plates which would be given him, drive the car to a place designated by members of the auto-theft ring. The authorities would follow and at the time of delivery would arrest all except Wright.

The police a few days later handed over two Illinois license plates to Wright. But the boy was afraid of the plan. He offered to return the plates to Porter, who refused them; he then returned them to police headquarters, where they were accepted. Wright told Porter he would not steal the car unless he had letters from Porter, The Herald-Post and the police authorizing him to do so. Porter was unable to get these letters, though he offered to give his own personal letter to Wright. This letter was to be placed in the hands of a third party and neither Wright nor Porter could get it without the signature of the other. Wright refused the deal.

We have here an interesting Reichstag fire provocation on a small scale. The idea of this clean, American plan was, of course, to establish a connection between the crime-wave ballyhoo of Mr. Cummings and the opening of the conference to serve as a basis for organizational propaganda. The country is menaced by crime. The Youth Congress dramatically combats crime. Come into the Youth Congress and preserve your country.

Observe the direct tie-up with authority disclosed by this testimony. The scheme involved the direct connivance of The Herald-Post, the city police and the county sheriff.

The second affidavit was given by Louis H. Laukhuf, a student at the University of Louisville. He was asked to be a delegate to the Congress by Colonel Beatty, who gave him to understand that he was acting for William E. Porter, who in turn represented Bernarr Macfadden. He was asked to be a delegate, not from the University of Louisville, but from another university he had supposedly attended. He was offered an invitation to a dinner given by Governor Laffoon the following Saturday and two tickets to the Congress. He declined the offer. Colonel Beatty then asked him to furnish the names of other students who might accept the proposal. Laukhuf refused to do this too. Laukhuf says he was actually offered a Kentucky colonelcy if he would become a delegate from a university he had never attended to the Congress.

This charming little number carries the American principles of the Congress right along. (The reader should refer back to the quotation, from the leaflet by Samuel Mines, especially the pious sentiments about an elected group, fair and balanced representation, etc.)

Mrs. Roosevelt Withdraws

COPIES of the foregoing affidavits were mailed by Dr. Freeman to all the scheduled speakers. Great was the havoc. Mrs. Roosevelt withdrew; Edgar Hoover withdrew; withdrawn was the entry of Dr. Walter Myer; Mr. Macfadden decided to stick to his knitting, the humane task of arousing sympathy for the starving Russian masses. But the show must go on, and substitute speakers were secured. Among these were Homer Chaillaux, head of the Americanism Committee of the American Legion, and Dr. Thos. H. Healy, listed as of the faculty of Georgetown University, also Chairman of the American Legion National Defence Committee. As befits this latter post, Dr. Healy is a man of firm convictions. Although receiving by mail copies of the affidavits, although personally visited by Dr. Freeman and a committee, Dr. Healy took a stand characterized by great firmness and some confusion. I quote from The Herald-Post of April 20:

He said that Dr. Freeman or anyone else, radical or otherwise, could not cause him to withdraw from the meeting by merely saying it was a radical organization.

Dr. Healy went on to emit a thunderous blast against the American League Against War and Fascism, the National Student League and the League for Industrial Democracy.

They are Bolsheviks from beginning to end, he said, and their prime purpose is to promote war, not peace.

Mr. Porter and Mr. Malcolm J. Freeborn, already referred to, are members of the elected-by-God-knows-whom Board of Governors of the American Youth Congress, Inc., of which Porter is also treasurer. Porter is also Chairman of the Southern Division. Mr. Freeborn heads a research bureau.

At Louisville, these two are the works.

As delegates to the conference arrived, they were put through a third-degree by Porter. Believe it or not, one question asked was: "How did you find out about this conference?" Then on Friday, April 19, the Congress opened.

Freeborn welcomed the delegates as their chairman. Mr. Porter, no doubt, had elected him. No program was brought forward or discussed, no questions answered. At about 2.30, Porter appeared and announced that the meetings were adjourned until Saturday. Forged credentials, he explained, were swarming all about and there would be no further conference until all had been checked.

It should be stated that at this time, and up until Saturday afternoon, there was present a total of only about sixteen delegates. Eight of them later turned out to be Porter's hand-picked delegates. The other eight or nine were genuine delegates; four from the University of Louisville, one from Chicago University, one from Butler University, one

from the Indiana University Extension Division, etc. This, Porter evidently felt, would not do.

Friday evening, the Governor entertained at a private dinner those delegates personally selected by Porter. What went on there, I am unable to report; but the care with which delegates were excluded and certain later developments, suggest that it was an occasion for more than speech making.

The following morning, The Herald-Post blazoned forth with headlines announcing that Governor Laffoon planned an investigation of radicalism in the ranks of the Congress. A statement followed by the American Legion Committee sponsoring the meeting which declared that on Friday the Congress had been packed with youths from the Federal Transient Bureau. All this before the conference has done anything whatsoever.

That same morning (Saturday), the convention convened once more. Mr. Freeborn elaborated on a thesis that in apprenticeship lay the salvation of youth—a scheme dear to the hearts of the National Manufacturers' Association, of which Macfadden is understood to be a representative.

Sudden Adjournment

THE next event was a proposal by Mr. Eugene Grueling, delegate from Butler University, that a resolution be passed favoring the extension of democracy from the field of politics to the field of industry. But before the resolution could be voted upon, Porter announced that the meeting was adjourned as the Governor's luncheon was about to begin. Delegates were furious. The conference, which had not a single delegate who in any way represented labor, much less the Negro youth, had been adjourned as soon as a resolution (mild and vague though it was) was proposed from the floor. It was adjourned not only for the morning, but later for the entire conference.

The luncheon, like the dinner, was closed to all but Porter's delegates. At two o'clock the others tried to get back into the meeting room but found it locked. They stormed about, learned that the luncheon was lasting longer than had been expected and the round-table discussion could not be resumed.

At the banquet-hall the delegates were refused admission. At three, they were told that the luncheon was over and now they could come in and listen to speeches.

Mr. Cummings broadcast to the Congress that America is menaced by crime, and youth should organize to combat this. (Unhappily, Porter's stolen car trick had fallen through.) Then Governor Laffoon repeated the substance of Cummings' speech, followed by Chaillaux, Commander of the American Legion. The first part was broadcast and only mildly offensive. The remainder was a vicious spewing of hatred for radicals, militants, foreign born. The melting pot has

How the Fascist "Youth Congress" Tried to Pose as a Crime Prosecutor

STATEMENT OF CLIFFORD WRIGHT

Commonwealth of Kentucky,
County of Jefferson.

The Affiant, Clifford Wright, says that he is nineteen years old, resident with his parents at 1609 Garland Avenue, Louisville, Ky.

Affiant says that on or about April 5, 1935, he went to see one William E. Porter in the Martin Brown Building in Louisville to ask him about the American Youth Congress, about which he had read an article in The Herald-Post. He says that in talking to Porter he mentioned that he had been approached to engage in automobile stealing and that he had declined to participate in such activity. Thereupon affiant says that Porter in the presence of one James Hart, a reporter of The Herald-Post, asked him to renew that contact with the automobile theft ring in order that he might expose such activity, as an example of the work of the American Youth Congress.

Affiant says that Porter proposed that this contact be made and exposure made in the following manner: Wright was to make contact with a member of the automobile theft ring and be accompanied by him in taking a car which was to be left by Porter in front of the Memorial Auditorium in Louisville with the keys in it. This car was to be a comparatively new Ford V-8, which would bring a good price. Wright and his accomplice were to drive the car away and replace the license tags with a pair of Illinois license plates. Later that night Wright and his accomplice were to drive the car to Owensboro or some other place which might be designated by the member of the auto theft ring. Porter, Hart and the proper authorities were to follow and after the car was sold to raid the place. They were to arrest everybody but Wright, who was supposed to be allowed to get away, keeping his share of the proceeds of the car.

Affiant says that on or about April 8 he went to Porter's office and there met two men in plain clothes who Porter said were police officers. Affiant says that these men gave him two 1935 Illinois license plates, which he was to substitute for the lawful plates of the stolen car in the plan hereinbefore described. He says that he took the plates and carried them around with him a day and then took them back to Porter and told him he did not want to take part in the plan. He says that Porter refused to take the plates and told him to take them to police headquarters, which he did. He says that he left them with the officer in charge.

Affiant says that he told Porter that he would not carry through the scheme unless he was given letters by Porter, The Herald-Post and the Police Department, stating that he was employed to work the scheme. Affiant says that Porter called up certain persons, who Porter said were The Herald-Post and the police, and that Porter failed to obtain the letters. However, affiant says, Porter wanted to give affiant a letter himself. Affiant says that Porter wanted to have a third party keep this letter with the agreement that neither affiant nor Porter could obtain the letter without the signature of the other. But affiant says that he refused to deal on this basis also.

Affiant says that Porter then asked him for a written version of his original statement that affiant was approached by an automobile ring and that affiant refused to deal with such a ring. Affiant says that he gave this statement with the understanding that it was to be kept confidential by Porter. Affiant says that notwithstanding this agreement the statement was published in a garbled and incomplete form in The Herald-Post, April 13, 1935.

(Signed) CLIFFORD WRIGHT.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this April 15, 1935.

My commission expires August 24, 1937.

George J. Gibson, Jr., Notary Public, Jefferson County, Ky.

"collected the scum of the earth." It was time it should become the "boiling pot."

The delegates and representatives of young people's groups drawn by The Herald-Post's blast were getting sick of the farce. Porter formed a group of accredited delegates to draft sentiments of the congress into resolutions. Five members who tried to sit in on the work were ejected, later more were thrown out. Finally, the board of governors, a few delegates and members of the American Legion retired to private quarters. The resolutions meeting adjourned the moment delegates attempted to take part in it.

While all this had been going on, the round-table had reconvened. Grueling again brought forward his resolution about industrial democracy. A delegate immediately assailed him, stating that the gentleman seemed to have no clear idea of what the congress stood for, and demanding his credentials. Grueling was defended by Sara Kasdan, one of the University of Louisiana delegation. In the meanwhile, Porter's group had adjourned, and the room was filling up with governors, Porterites, Legionnaires and God knows whom besides. A Legionnaire now moved to adjourn. Before this could be seconded, Miss Kasdan asked for a point of order. Looking around at the gang that had packed into the room, she said, "I would like to know just how many persons in this room are under thirty!" (The age limit for members of the organization.) Grinning, all the graybeards and baldheads held up their hands. The motion to adjourn was seconded. The delegates raised a terrific protest, but the assemblage of Legionnaires, governors et al., carried an adjournment and the Porter part of the Congress was now at an end.

At this point, I refer the reader back to the Mines quotation, also, to the affidavit of Laukhuf; and again, to the anguished wails of Governor Laffoon and the Legion, concerning "packed meetings."

The delegates at once withdrew and proceeded to hold a genuine meeting. They affiliated to the national group of the American Youth Congress—and not to the "Incorporated" section. They elected as chairman Emanuel Boggs; as vice-chairman, Lamar Hamilton; Sara Kasdan for secretary; and Betty Cohen for treasurer; all delegates from the University of Louisville. It was decided to call a South Central conference, to build a real youth group. Out of town delegates were appointed as chairmen in their home cities, and instructed to return there and proceed with the work of preparing for the conference.

Only one thing more need be mentioned about the events of the conference. The rumpers sent Porter a committee, asking if his group would recognize them. They were, of course, refused. I quote from The Sunday Courier-Journal:

... officials of the group indorsed by the Legion pointed out that the rump session began after the scheduled conference was adjourned officially,

and, therefore, had no standing or authenticity, and did not represent the Congress in any way.

After all, they were nothing but delegates.

A Fourth Attempt

THE Congress which I have here reported is not the first, but the fourth attempt, to form with direct governmental support, a fascist youth group.

What does it mean? Why this determination to corral American youth? Well, let's ask ourselves some questions, and then check the answers against revealed facts. Suppose that you wished to lower the national wage-scale? Suppose you wished to bring about a fascist rule? Wouldn't it be helpful, if the young people could be inveigled into working for little or nothing; into joining the militarized C. C. C.; into withdrawing themselves from struggle and marooning themselves on subsistence projects?

With these questions in mind, let us observe that Hearst is carrying on a horror campaign on crime. His pages reek with pictures of people shot down, murdered, etc. But observe his headlines. *Young murderers. Youthful robbers. Adolescent criminals.* Let us notice that the Attorney General is singing, in modified form, the same tune. Finally, here is a youth movement. Built around what? Around the selfsame theme. And a youth movement backed by business men, by the governors of half a dozen states, by educators, by the Legion; a movement which originally the head of the Department of Justice, the Attorney General of the United States and the wife of the President had pledged themselves to inaugurate.

Upon examination, we find this movement

to be based upon what? Upon the real needs of youth, such as the principle of getting an adult's pay for an adult's work, for social insurance, against war, against fascism? Not at all. The program is one of militarization; of poverty; of segregation, hatred, prejudice.

When, therefore, we find such a program as this setting forth the demands of the big industrialists; when we find prominent in it such persons as Macfadden, the ally of Hearst; and the most openly fascist elements of the Legion bureaucracy, as typified by Chaillaux—then we can consider the attempt to organize a group on such a program nothing but an attempt to secure, in American youth, a mass basis for fascism.

As for the presence of Mrs. Roosevelt on the advisory board—certainly, after the complete exposure of Ilma, it is difficult to conceive that a person in the position occupied by Mrs. Roosevelt should wish to continue a relation of sponsorship to the organization, unless we assume that her intent is to foster its growth.

Perhaps the most fatal of all political fallacies is the delusion that fascism develops outside of government; independently of government; in opposition to government. From this fallacy, the history of the three attempts to form a business and governmentally-controlled youth movement should free us. From these experiences there must flow the realization that we are compelled to, the determination that we will, forge a united front of young and old, worker and intellectual, native, Negro and foreign born, so broad and powerful that it will inevitably defeat those groups and those forces now feverishly working towards the formation of a Hitler America.

"Sea Safety" for Fascism

HAYS JONES

LIBERALS expressed plaintive bewilderment when they learned that the Roosevelt program of "sea-safety" did not include fireproof passenger vessels. But it only brought a laugh from the crews who risk their lives on potential Morro Castles. The Roosevelt program doesn't provide fireproof passenger vessels, because these vessels constitute a "Naval Auxiliary" and ships can't very well be naval auxiliaries and fireproof at the same time.

All passenger ships, and most freighters, built in recent years are built to "naval specifications." They are built for the navy to use in time of war. It would cost a lot of money to keep these ships as regular units in the navy and no one would make any profits on them. But as passenger vessels, they can earn their keep and train "auxiliaries" for the naval personnel as well—and help build political fences by giving "worthy"

shipowners a lift. That lift is \$28,000,000 a year, at present in the guise of "mail contracts" but soon to come out as an "honest" subsidy.

The navy doesn't need ornate "bridal suites," fancy bars and ball rooms, and cubbyholes down below where third-class tourist trade bunks four in a room. The passenger trade does. So the navy specifies hull construction and the construction of magazines and magazine hatches and the layout of the engine room, and leaves the midships a shell that can be subdivided to suit the passenger trade.

The navy also requires "quick convertibility." Its officers boast that the big ships can be made into armed cruisers in a week or ten days. That easy convertibility is accomplished by using flimsy wood and wall board for interior partitions—creating fire-traps like the Morro Castle. As long as