

# NEW MASSES

ESTABLISHED 1911

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## As Congress Opens

**B**EFORE considering the prospects of the Seventy-Fifth Congress, which opened on Tuesday, there is something which the progressive reader ought to do at once. He should go to the nearest telegraph station and wire his congressman and senators the strongest possible protest against any attempt to aid Franco, Hitler, and Mussolini by so-called neutrality laws preventing the shipment of arms and supplies to the Spanish government.

International law has always recognized the right of a legally established government to have free access to all kinds of supplies in a civil war. This is the foundation of the United States neutrality law passed in 1922 and still in effect. What Senator Pittman and Representative McNary are proposing, with Administration backing, is not really neutrality. To prevent the shipment of American supplies to the Spanish government, means, in effect, to increase the odds in favor of the fascists. Italy and Germany will continue to ship supplies to Franco, but we will not be permitted to ship supplies to the Spanish people—supplies to which they are entitled.

**W**HAT Congress does for democracy abroad may indicate its attitude toward democracy at home. Roosevelt's overwhelming majority at the polls last November was a mandate for progressive legislation. But, as our editorials pointed out at that time, the President is no guarantee against reaction. Since then, big business has made it clear that it intends to carry out its program at the expense of the people by working through the Roosevelt administration. *Sphere*, Washington organ of the bankers and industrialists, said in so many words about this policy: if you can't lick a man, work with him. The reaction will now seek to get through Roosevelt what it had hoped to achieve through Landon.

Labor and middle-class groups can defend their interests against this drive only by organized and concerted action for progressive legislation in the Seventy-Fifth Congress. The Connery Bill, amended to provide not only a thirty-hour week without reduction in pay but also trade-union wage rates, ought to be pushed vigorously. It should be strengthened to provide an adequate minimum annual wage to all workers. The National Labor Relations Act should be amended to compel employers to recognize trade unions.

Every effort must be made to have Congress pass social insurance legislation for the unemployed, the aged, the disabled, and the sick, based on the Workers' Unemployment,

Old Age, and Social Insurance Bill. Those who fight for this bill should also seek amendments to the Social Security Act to cover all workers of hand and brain now excluded from its provisions. The present taxes on wages should be repealed and the entire cost of social insurance should be placed upon the employers and the government.

**I**T IS imperative to fight with the utmost vigor for the repeal of all federal legislation which infringes upon political rights and freedom of press, assemblage, and radio. Bills should be passed outlawing terrorist groups like the Black Legion, the Ku-Klux Klan, and the vigilantes. The federal anti-injunction law should be strengthened to prevent judges, sheriffs, and employers from breaking strikes and curbing labor legislation.

The Seventy-Fifth Congress must be compelled to face the problem of Supreme Court absolutism. Congress must reaffirm its constitutional power to pass labor and social legislation without Supreme Court interference, and the Constitution should be amended to deny the Court power to nullify social and labor legislation.

Energetic support should be given to the Wagner-Costigan bill against lynching, and other bills should be pushed to give the Negro people equal rights to jobs, the full right to organize, vote, serve on juries, and hold public office. Measures should also be taken to provide states and cities with funds to maintain adequate relief standards; to extend the W.P.A.; to increase W.P.A. wages twenty percent; to grant W.P.A. workers the right of collective bargaining and trade union rates, with a minimum monthly wage of forty dollars.

**T**HESE are a few of the practical measures which Congress can and should pass, and which all progressive groups in this country should fight for. Such groups will also support appropriate amendments to the Walsh-Healy law and the Connery and O'Mahoney bills in order to help abolish the sweat shop, curb the speed-up and child labor, furnish adequate protection for women, erect proper safeguards against industrial accidents and diseases. They will also support the O'Mahoney Licensing Bill with appropriate amendments in order to curb monopolistic practices harmful to labor, consumers, and small business people. They will push bills calling for a national housing authority, and the erection of dwellings available to families with low incomes. They will do their utmost to maintain, extend, and democratize the National Youth Administration, and will support an amendment to the Constitution abolishing child labor.

Such influence as America's democratic forces can bring to bear in the new Congress will combine the struggle against fascism here with a fight for a peace policy based on the principle that the United States can be kept out of war by keeping war out of the world. This is the only way to amend the present Neutrality Act in the interests of this people. Let the law prohibit the sale and delivery of goods and the granting of loans to nations engaged in a foreign war contrary to the provisions of the Kellogg Peace Pact. Let Congress strengthen all measures for collective security, envisaging coöperation with the League of Nations, the Soviet Union, and all peace forces of the world against the military aggression of Germany, Italy, and Japan.

Great problems, domestic and foreign, will confront the Congress which opened Tuesday. These problems will be handled in the interests of the people only if we ourselves take vigorous steps to have the necessary bills enacted.

# REVIEW AND COMMENT

*The crisis in the Socialist Party—History, "liberal" and partisan—How to get a job*

ONE of the leading figures in the Communist Party analyzes here\* the situation of the Socialist Party. The job is done vigorously, concisely, with logic and with passion. A superficial reviewer's adjective that might ordinarily be applied to it would be "devastating." But that would be false to the spirit of the book, which was written not with any wish to devastate but to speak from inside the great comradeship of the revolutionary movement, with revolutionary candor to a revolutionary group that is not meeting its revolutionary responsibilities.

It takes up the history of the Socialist Party from the time when it split off from the sectarian Socialist Labor Party and brought Marxist thought into the stream of American political life.

In the thirty-five years of its existence it has reflected, in the main, not the victorious Socialism of Lenin and the Bolsheviks, but the compromising and revisionist tendencies of the Social Democratic Parties of the Second International, which have failed to turn revolutionary crises into revolutions and by their opportunism have made the road easier for fascism.

Like the European Social Democratic Parties, the American party's organization and discipline have been loose; its leadership has been predominantly petty-bourgeois: its horizons have been the mirages of evolutionary socialism, parliamentary action, general education, and reform.

In its trade-union policy it has been vacillating. As early as 1905 it divided into two camps on the issue of industrial unionism, with the result that its left wing wasted its strength in dual unions while its right wing pursued a policy of neutrality until, after 1919, when the Socialist Party split and the Communist Party was formed, it identified itself almost completely with the ruling clique in the A.F. of L. In the boom years of the twenties this policy reached its disgraceful climax in almost open class collaboration, supporting the B. & O. and similar plans of speed-up and company unionism.

It has always been indifferent and now, when the issue is crucial, it is hostile to the movement for a broad American labor party. Opportunism characterized its position in the world war. Its attitude to the Russian revolution and to the building of socialism in the Soviet Union has been in the main one of hostile criticism, which the capitalist press has made consistent use of. In the depression it was lethargic, scarcely taking any steps to organize the workers.

In its necessary brevity this picture has a consistency which Socialist policy, always contradictory and vacillating, has lacked. Much

of what has been said above is true of the leadership and especially of the old guard section of the leadership. Rank-and-file dissent has marked the whole course of the party. This dissent produced splits, the major one leading to the formation of the Communist Party. Its attitude to the U.S.S.R., to the labor party, to the united front, have produced doubt and discontent in its membership and caused loss in membership and inertia in its activities.

What is the situation in the Socialist Party today? It has receded from the comparatively Left position taken in the Detroit Convention in 1934, where it had faced active revolt as well as the passive revolt of loss of membership. It has vacillated with its chief leader, Norman Thomas. Its attitude toward the Soviet Union is ambiguous, with the balance inclining, as of old, to the side of hostility. Its attitude, both to the labor party and the united front, is an official "no" and an informal "yes" as sections of the rank and file defy their leadership and force sanction for local actions.

As a whole, but this time from a Left sectarian position, it is keeping out of the revolutionary main stream. By admitting Trotskyism into its ranks it risks a definitely counter-revolutionary orientation. The new rationalizations for inaction which Trotskyism supplies may be dearly bought by the possible cost of complete inanition, of becoming a sect without a mass following. ISIDOR SCHNEIDER.

## A "Liberal" Historian

A NEW AMERICAN HISTORY, by W. E. Woodward. Farrar & Rinehart, Inc. \$4.

THOSE who have read his other books, especially *Meet General Grant*, will remember W. E. Woodward to be a historian-

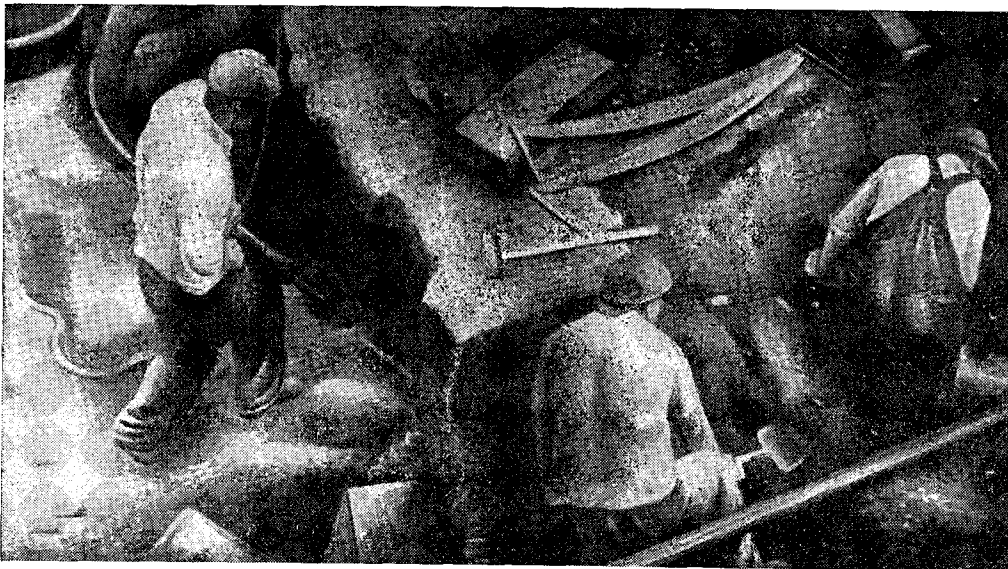
journalist with a more than common talent. They will also remember him to be in that large area, somewhat without boundaries, called Liberal.

In the past Woodward's work has been sprightly and provocative. His exposition of the homespun corruption of the Grant era, for instance, was an honest if not definitive piece of work, written with a nice balance between plain debunking and social criticism. Without drawing final conclusions, it showed an acquisitive society at its typical worst.

In these earlier works, Woodward, with somewhat more talent than his fellows, belonged rather definitely to a school of popular historical writing in fashion five or six years ago. It was a school, on the whole, without scholarship (I say this in no derogatory sense), with a general tone of liberal indignation and a tendency to smash plaster-cast heroes. Without any encompassing (or encumbering, if you will) social theory to mold and channelize their vague apprehension that all was not in history as Lord Macaulay set it down, history of this school performed a valuable, though limited, function. It educated the American public up to its own level and taught it to be less credulous about its past.

The method employed by this school was, however, slightly disarming. Its inherent, if befuddled, honesty, and its very real gift for narrative reconstruction, led to a disinclination to apply strict canons of historical criticism to it. One just did not think overly hard about it at all. But when a member of that school, Mr. Woodward in this instance, attempts to extend the method into a general history, it calls for closer examination.

Mr. Woodward in this new work sets out to cover the whole of American history, from its English background to the year the public



W.P.A. Workers

Painting by Abraham Harritan

\*THE CRISIS IN THE SOCIALIST PARTY, by William Z. Foster. Workers Library Publishers. 5c.