

# The South versus the C.I.O.

*The bourbon agents of Wall Street are resorting to every weapon, including "Divine Providence," lynch law, and even anti-lynch law*

By Bruce Crawford

**A**GAIN the bourbon South is in a state of rebellion. But this time it does not rebel against a dominant northern influence. It does not defy Wall Street, which exploits the South as a colonial area. Rather, the bourbon South is revolting against the Roosevelt administration and, primarily, against the Committee for Industrial Organization. Industrialists and landowners recognize the C.I.O. as another emancipation movement.

Just as the grandees of 1861 rebelled in defense of their system of cheap black labor, so today the "Cotton Ed" Smiths, Byrneses, Garners, Glasses, and Byrds are fighting to preserve an economy of cheap labor, both white and black. These southerners, who are in reality colonial agents answerable to Wall Street, protect northern capital invested in the South to reap profits on a low living standard, unorganized labor, and artificially created race antagonisms. The C.I.O. is, of course, a threat to all this. And these southern Democrats, abetted by anti-labor elements everywhere, carry the flag of revolt against their own party which was returned to power by unprecedented mass support.

It is not surprising that southern opposition to the wage-hour and anti-lynching bills waxed to white heat just when the C.I.O. announced an intensive drive in textiles. Fear of unionization, which would grant both Negro and white workers some measure of independence and self-determination, has thrown the bourbons into paroxysms. They are cruelly frank, making no bones about their intention to keep the workers down by whatever means they deem necessary.

IN DENOUNCING the wages-and-hours bill, Senator Smith declared that, if a worker in South Carolina could "live comfortably" on fifty cents a day whereas a New England worker required a dollar and a half a day, there was "no justice" in raising the southern worker's pay to the level of the New England worker—especially when "God had favored the South with advantages." Cotton Ed failed to say that the landlords and mill owners profited most, if not entirely, by the providential favoritism, else the nadir of human conditions would not exist in places like South Carolina. Smith is the same senator, it will be recalled, who walked out of the Democratic national convention last year because a Negro minister from Chicago presumably asked the same God to guide the party's deliberations.

The anti-lynching bill provoked this outburst—typical of the fury of unreconstructed bourbonism in such matters—from Senator

Claude Pepper, who on other issues has been a consistent New Dealer:

Whatever may be written into the constitution, whatever may be placed upon the statute books of this nation, however many soldiers may be stationed about the ballot boxes of the southland, the colored race will not vote, because in doing so under present circumstances they endanger the supremacy of a race to which God has committed the destiny of a continent, perhaps of a world!

There you are. The people of this republic cannot, through their elected representatives in congress or the forty-eight state legislatures, enact any laws which the southern ruling class is bound to respect! The enfranchized majority of the South cannot do so, either. God's chosen will remain supreme, democracy be blown.

But even an anti-lynching law, especially if it is a state statute, can be made the instrument of injustice, a strikebreaking weapon, where enforcement lies with officials who serve big business.

A case in point is on record in Virginia where the C.I.O. is moving into textiles and other industries. Pickets at the Industrial Rayon Corp. plant in Covington, scene of the Old Dominion's bitterest anti-union drive, have been prosecuted under the state anti-lynching law passed in 1928. (This is particularly appalling to me, inasmuch as I was partly responsible for the law's passage, having made almost a permanent issue of a lynching that occurred in my Virginia home town of Norton.)

Following a provoked skirmish at the mill gates, several workers were given penitentiary terms of from two to four years on charges of "assault and battery while a member of a mob." (My italics.) The pickets did not realize they were being convicted under the anti-lynching statute. They were not specifically charged with lynching or with an attempt to lynch. Some corporation lawyer, tipped off perhaps by a state official, made flexible use of the mob clause.

The anti-lynching law was offered in the legislature at the instance of Governor Harry Byrd, now in the U. S. Senate and more and more inclined toward reaction. The law was an achievement of which he was quite proud as governor, but Senator Byrd has not yet deplored this outrageous misapplication of the law.

As Virginius Dabney, liberal editor of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, commented, such construction of the anti-lynching law "makes a felony of a misdemeanor" and calls for "long prison terms, thus seriously handicap-

ping Virginia organized labor in the pursuit of its legitimate activities."

At one Covington plant the C.I.O. recently won a labor board election, and that seems to have put reactionaries on guard against such developments at other places. State troopers are called out at the behest of industrialists to prevent unionization wherever possible. If intimidation or provoked or planted violence—as apparently has been the case at the Industrial Rayon plant—can keep workers from organizing, then there will be no election. Governor George C. Peery, who is Senator Byrd's right hand man in Virginia and a likely candidate to succeed the aging Senator Glass, has been prompt to dispatch troopers at the request of corporations. He sent state patrolmen to Covington to protect "the right to work." The *Roanoke Times*, of Glass-Byrd persuasion, declared: "Neither Covington nor any other Virginia town can be allowed to duplicate the recent disgraceful developments in Youngstown and other steel centers in Ohio and Pennsylvania." But has the *Times* denounced the disgraceful use of the Virginia anti-lynching law in its neighboring community?

The pontifical *Richmond News Leader*, which spreads poisonous reaction in a guise of liberalism, quoted Tom Girdler to hearten and embolden industrialists at grips with the C.I.O. "Tom Girdler's boldness," the editor wrote, "marks a turning point in the public attitude toward the steel strike. . . . Now, for the first time, C.I.O. is met with a thunderous and defiant 'No!' Girdler has said what millions think. . . . Industry was waiting for someone who was just that—positive." And other Virginia dailies, including Senator Glass's *Lynchburg News*, likewise applauded Girdler.

Promptly all industries, large and small, appealed to the public for sympathy in their struggles with the advancing C.I.O. "We announce that we cannot comply with the demands of the C.I.O. and that we have completely closed our plant!" declared a Roanoke bakery in newspaper advertisements. Similar statements were made by other companies, coal corporations among them, although most of them either signed C.I.O. contracts and reopened or started up with state troopers on the scene as strikebreakers. Most of the plants in Roanoke, a teeming industrial city, finally settled with the C.I.O., and granted wage and hour demands. The Vicosé Rayon Co. conceded a 10 percent raise, a fifteen dollar minimum weekly wage, a forty-hour week, and a week's vacation with pay, in addition to union recognition. Approxi-

mately five thousand employees were affected.

In Richmond, textile contracts have been signed with some companies—in one instance, at the Richmond Piece Dye Works, the terms provided hourly minimum rates of forty cents for women and fifty-five cents for men. In Danville, long a turbulent sector, three thousand T.W.O.C. workers won agreements in the cotton mills. In the state as a whole the C.I.O. is gaining, although progress is uneven. In May more than twenty thousand members had been signed up, and new ones have been joining at the rate of about six thousand a month. The United Mine Workers are well organized in southwestern Virginia.

While the C.I.O. is advancing in the Old Dominion, the resistance has been very bitter, and industrialists are far from relaxing. It is just possible that Virginia, for all its boasted liberalism, will outdo the most reactionary southern states in the war on the C.I.O. Ten years ago Governor Byrd inaugurated a new policy to lure industries. While tax exemptions, low-paid labor, and similar inducements were not advertised, as was true of other states, Virginia's labor policy was one on which relocating industries could rely. "Political liberalism and fiscal conservatism," a slogan coined by the Richmond *News Leader*, seemed to represent the Byrd policy—the political "liberalism" to hold popular support and the fiscal conservatism to reassure business men. The state boasted the best highway patrol system in the union, a constabulary ready for any emergency. As a result, many textile and chemical plants came to Virginia.

In this connection, a thirty million dollar rayon plant recently passed up West Virginia, where organized labor was introducing a program of legislation in the general assembly, and located in the mother state. West Virginia newspapers deplored the loss and blamed it on labor's efforts to improve itself. The program, however, was defeated by corporation legislators and lobbyists. West Virginia business men are now saying that their state needs a "strong position on labor like they have in Virginia."

I have stressed the situation in Virginia because it is typical of what exists more or less throughout the South. Famed Virginia democracy is really an aristocracy, a few job-holding families kept in power by a restricted franchise and mainly serving the big corporations, most of them headed up in New York. The rulers brag about Virginia's "good government," attributing it to participation by a "literate few," but offer no explanation of the increasing marginal population. It has been

good government for the aristocrats, but a large element of the population has not had even the benefits of paternalism. Organized labor is trying to have the poll tax repealed as a prerequisite for voting, so that the masses will not be disfranchised by poverty.

The C.I.O. looks forward to the new state administration, after next January, without much enthusiasm. In the recent Democratic primary, Lieutenant-Governor James H. Price was nominated. A moderate Roosevelt man, Jim Price at first was opposed by the Byrd forces, but when they saw they couldn't head him off, they sailed onto his coat tails and rode back in with him—Democratic nomination being equivalent to election. At the same time, however, they nominated two Byrd men for the posts of lieutenant-governor and attorney-general. It remains to be seen whether Governor Price will support the Roosevelt program in its most vital aspects. Many liberals and radicals are afraid he will make peace with Byrd and Glass and join erstwhile New Dealers who have ratted on Roosevelt. The most definite statement the next governor has made with reference to the C.I.O. was: "I favor a policy of fairness to both capital and labor."

In West Virginia, which is not strictly a southern state, the C.I.O. is making rapid



Maine

gains. John B. Easton, president of the State Federation of Labor, who favors the C.I.O., wrote to me: "Its status is exceedingly encouraging. Several thousand workers have been put into industrial unions. Practically 90 percent of all organized labor, aside from the building trades and railroad organizations, are either in the C.I.O. groups or exceedingly sympathetic to them." The largest textile union in the state is the C.I.O. local at Parkersburg, with more than five thousand dues-paying members. It is highly probable that the C.I.O. will dominate the State Federation convention this year, as many of the

A. F. of L. unions have been switching to the industrial groups.

In Kentucky, Governor "Happy" Chandler, elected in the Roosevelt landslide, has made it known that he does not intend to be another Governor Murphy or Governor Earle. He made that plain in a recent speech in the presence of Governor Peery of Virginia, and the two chief executives congratulated the "stalwart, self-reliant citizenship" of the sister commonwealths—although when labor becomes militant and determines to help itself, they are against such self-reliance. "Illegal possession of private property," Governor Chandler said with reference to sit-down strikes, "will not be tolerated in Kentucky." He defended Harlan against outside agitators and "newspaper talk." The C.I.O. has made little progress in Kentucky. The United Mine Workers increased its membership in Harlan county, thanks to the spotlight of the La-Follette investigation.

Elsewhere in the South plans are complete for an intensive C.I.O. campaign. Most of the five hundred textile organizers in the field will invade the Carolinas, Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, and Texas. Everything except railroads, building trades, trucking, and other occupations already well organized, is mapped for unionization. Agricultural workers, cotton pickers, sharecroppers, and tobacco hands—especially those ignored by William Green—will be organized. The drive in agricultural areas will do most to enrage the reactionaries. The land workers have been the worst off in the whole South, and as an unorganized group they have been the heaviest drag on labor progress.

Textiles being the South's most important industry, most of the fighting will take place in towns and cities supported by mill workers' wages. The owners and their newspapers and politicians will try to array the middle class against the workers whose wages make business good. Southern industrialists have watched the experience of northern owners and may profit by their mistakes. They are certain to profit by Tom Girdler's attitude. Southern owners and public officials, who have consistently defied constitutional amendments respecting the Negro, will defy the Wagner Labor Relations Act, wage and hour standards, or any other laws which threaten their traditional supremacy. They took up arms once to defend that supremacy and lost at Appomattox. Then they were fighting big wealth in the North which was concerned primarily with eliminating cheap labor as an unbeatable factor in competition with southern agriculture and industry. Today the southern rebels have the support of northern wealth, for the most part, especially in their opposition to the C.I.O. and the fundamental features of the New Deal program. The passionate, furious attacks they made on Senator Hugo Black, the liberal out of their own Deep South who was nominated to the Supreme Court, indicates the depth of their hatred for anything likely to enhance popular government or trim the self-assured powers of a tory judiciary.





Lithograph by Don Freeman

## THE SCAB



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## "Orders from Stalin"?

"ORDERS from Stalin"—this is what some of the leaders of the Socialist Party said about the expulsions of the Trotskyites in France, not to speak of the suppression of the Trotskyites in Spain. Is the Socialist Party now taking "orders from Stalin"?

This question may shock Norman Thomas and other leaders of the S.P. Why, the Trotskyites are expelled "merely" as wreckers of the party! But this was exactly the case in France, under conditions when the workers realized that by fighting the People's Front the Trotskyites are doing the job for fascism. This was exactly the case in Spain, under conditions of armed struggle!

The Trotskyites in New York are fighting the Socialist Party by selling slanderous literature on Fourteenth Street. Suppose they had arms, as the Spanish Trotskyites had (or, still have)? Suppose the S.P. was in the leadership of a government conducting an armed struggle against fascism? The fight would have been much the same, if with different means and different results.

The members of the Socialist Party as well as all progressive elements may learn an international lesson from the present expulsions in New York and other cities. They may also learn something about the Moscow trials, about the struggle of the Bolshevik Party in the Soviet Union against Trotskyist wreckers. The desperate means the Trotskyites are now employing against the S.P. can hardly be compared to what these wreckers have done and are trying to do in the Soviet Union, where the Bolshevik Party leads in the upbuilding of a socialist economy which the Trotskyites are trying to destroy because of their counter-revolutionary line. In the desperate struggle they are conducting over there, against each and every factory, the railroads, the Red Army, they have degenerated into assassins, into agents of fascism. This is what they *basically* are everywhere, though conditions may be different.

It would be well for the members of the

Socialist Party to consider the words of Stalin:

Present-day Trotskyism is no longer what it was, let us say, seven or eight years ago; that Trotskyism and the Trotskyites have passed through a serious evolution in this period which has utterly changed the face of Trotskyism; that in view of this the struggle against Trotskyism and the method of struggle against it must also be utterly changed. Our party comrades did not notice that Trotskyism has ceased to be a political trend in the working class, that it has changed from the political trend in the working class which it was seven or eight years ago, into a frantic and unprincipled gang of wreckers, diversionists, spies, and murderers acting on the instructions of the intelligence services of foreign states. (*Mastering Bolshevism*, Workers' Library Publishers, p. 14.)

The Socialists struggling against Trotskyist wreckers in the U.S.A., against enemies of the united fight against war and fascism, will now be in a better position to get the meaning of these words.

## Iron Men and Wooden Heads

WITH a strange mixture of effrontery and deceit William Green wrote to Joseph P. Kennedy, chairman of the Maritime Commission, urging that body to abandon its "neutral attitude" toward labor organization along the waterfront. In behalf of Joe Ryan, national vice-president of the A. F. of L., who is trying desperately to revive the International Seamen's Union, Green's letter stated:

The Maritime Commission is in a measure responsible for the development of destructive factionalism because the commission has assumed a neutral attitude. . . . The faction affiliated with the A. F. of L. does not practice nor does it condone either outlaw strikes or sit-down strikes. Under the circumstances we contend that the Maritime Commission should not remain neutral but should frankly and courageously encourage that faction which has by its record and by its past and present conduct demonstrated its loyalty and its readiness to fight, if need be, for the maintenance and honest observance of agreements.

The "destructive factionalism" to which Mr. Green referred was undoubtedly the strong National Maritime Union, which in the past five months has absorbed 95 percent of the I.S.U.'s former membership. Commenting on the situation, an N.M.U. official observed: "The membership which he [Green] praises is now in our organization. We are the former members of the I.S.U. We heartily endorse the praise which Mr. Green has for our membership." Mr. Kennedy wasn't fooled, either. Somewhat dryly he wrote the A. F. of L. president: "You charge that this commission has assumed a neutral attitude toward all labor organizations. That charge is true. . . . Consequently we cannot espouse the cause of your faction as you demand. . . ."

As might be expected, however, Messrs. Green and Ryan found support elsewhere. Eight members of the crew of the Clyde-Mallory liner *Seminole* have just filed charges with the National Labor Relations Board. The men swear that ship's officers warned them they would be fired unless they quit the N.M.U. and joined Mr. Ryan's new union. And Ira A. Campbell, general counsel of the American Steamship Owners' Association, warned the commission that Atlantic Coast shipping might be destroyed if the present trend (i.e., toward the N.M.U.) continued. Some rank-and-file workers in the A. F. of L. must wonder which side their bread is buttered on.

## Flaming Job Holders

THE sweetest dreams that punctuate the sleep of a political reactionary must be those in which he envisions the youth of the land delivered over to him in the form of safe votes. The successes of the American Youth Congress and its varied affiliates disturb this dream for they prove that large and growing sections of our young people are politically insurgent.

Millions of young Americans in their search for a political answer to their problems have snatched at the New Deal philosophy. Where are they being led? The Young Democrats, organization of the most active of them, have just held a convention in Indianapolis. Ten thousand members attended, 85 percent of them under thirty years of age. Eight thousand five hundred of these ten thousand Young Democrats held politically appointed or elected jobs; we cannot help surmising that the remaining fifteen hundred were there in the hope of getting such. No startling contributions toward solving youth's problems could be expected of such a gathering.

Lockwood Thompson of Ohio, Newton D. Baker's law partner, ran for president on a "liberal" ticket. He was defeated, though, by Pitt Tyson Maner of Alabama, who ran his pre-convention campaign on stationery with the letterhead motto, "White Supremacy for the Right." His method of winning could serve as an example to young politicians on the make. Here's how it was done. Young Democratic conventions automatically provide each state with three votes. Payment of \$100 for each thousand paid-up members buys one additional vote; the limit is the number of votes held by the state in the last Democratic party convention. Alabama helped other states pay for their votes, it appears; openly, at that. Checks were exhibited written on Alabama banks, signed by a Mr. Rainey, assistant of Mr. Maner—\$2900 "for New Jersey dues"; \$300 "for balance of