

stature was lent to dignify such slogans as "Buy now, even if it is only a spool of thread" and "Do your Christmas shopping now." But no "buy-now" movement of any proportions developed and department-store owners have resorted to such shoddy tricks as hiring professional shoppers to go from store to store to maintain an appearance of "business as usual."

Despite employer propaganda, the Pacific Coast edition of the *Wall Street Journal* bore witness to the effectiveness of the strike. Torn between its duties to the department stores and its obligations to subscribers, the *Journal* told of the strike's effect in very circumspect terms. However, it told enough to show that the strike crippled service and the popular boycott ruined business.

Said the *Journal* (September 15): "The thirty-five large stores, strikebound since September 7, are open and doing business, but handicapped by inability to make deliveries, or to receive much merchandise except by express."

Just how "business as usual" can be conducted without the receipt of merchandise and the delivery of sales is a mystery whose solution remains with the department-store owners.

Further, the *Journal* disclosed that "retail department-stores that are not affected by labor troubles are making a more favorable showing, comparatively, than in August, and are probably benefiting by the handicap of the others."

At this writing, the employers definitely have not succeeded in enlisting the middle class for their open-shop war.

Labor has struck several effective counterblows in the battle of the "public." Under impetus of the strike, a League of Women Shoppers, hitherto non-existent here, was organized with some three hundred members. Pledges were received from the Students Workers Federation, composed of working students at the University of California in nearby Berkeley, that they would halt would-be scabs on the campus. One union advertisement appeared in the press. And John F. Shelley, president of the Central Labor Council and member of the council's advisory committee in the strike,

took to the air. He made the most of the union's trump card. On five separate occasions, it had offered to arbitrate and each time the employers refused. Shelley appealed to the public to demand that "these employers give up their arrogant and arbitrary attitude and apply sane, rational, and peaceful methods to the adjustment of this problem."

Aside from the contest for the middle class, there is one other avenue through which the employers could succeed in their open-shop objective: disunity in labor's ranks. If they gambled on such a possibility, they drew a deuce. Not since the maritime strike of 1936 has any struggle so fired the labor movement. The Department Store Employees Union has been literally flooded with pledges of solidarity and offers of financial support.

Twenty-four craft unions whose members do some sort of work in department stores have refused to cross the picket lines. The teamsters' union has voted that any member who crosses the line be fined \$100. Little more than a month ago, members of the teamsters' union in Oakland, upon orders of Dave Beck who spoke in the name of the sanctity of contracts, crashed department-store picket lines and broke a strike.

Because a CIO union, the warehousemen,

and an AFL union, the clerks, are both under fire now, a genuine atmosphere of AFL-CIO solidarity has been created. Across the bay, the Alameda County Central Trades and Labor Council, AFL, unanimously voted to grant the floor to a CIO spokesman, and cheered his plea for unity. In this same council, not so long ago, delegates applauded when the secretary reported, "I have received several communications from CIO unions and have filed them in the wastebasket."

The Beauticians Union, which had organized a ball where labor's beauty queen for the 1939 Golden Gate Exposition was to be selected, called off the beauty contest "because organized labor is in no mood for frolicking." "The entire labor movement is faced with a definite fight for its existence," said a formal statement. "We cannot go on with an affair of this kind while our very existence is jeopardized."

Actors voted to fine their members \$25 if they crossed the picket lines. Musicians raised the ante and made it \$100. Chauffeurs, sign painters, photographers, waitresses, janitors, longshoremen, pharmacists—the entire working class of San Francisco, AFL and CIO—have rallied to the strike's support. There is a wide and keen awareness of the fundamental issue involved.

With unusual astuteness, the *Labor Relations Reporter* has commented that "in the background [of the open-shop offensive] is an initiative proposal, to be voted on in November, which would drastically limit in California the right to strike and picket." From the long-range viewpoint, the greatest danger lies here. On September 16, a drastic anti-picketing ordinance was passed in an initiative referendum in Los Angeles. One ace in the employers' propaganda deck was distorted stories of the San Francisco strike. Judging by the Los Angeles experience, and gauging sentiment in the rural communities, if the employers can continue their provocations in San Francisco, they could create the resentment toward "union irresponsibility" which would result in passage of a state-wide anti-labor law.

By the same token, they could conceivably avert what on the surface looks like almost certain defeat, and reelect a reactionary Republican administration in a state where the Democratic registration is twice as big.

These more complex long-range political considerations are not as widely understood in the labor movement as is the immediate skirmish in San Francisco. The battle today is a combination of provocation and testing ground. Upon the outcome of the November elections depends whether the employers will launch their large-scale frontal attack for a big showdown.

It is symbolic that the maritime strike of 1934 and its attendant San Francisco general strike set in motion that wave of organization which swept the major open-shop strongholds in American industry. The employers' counter-offensive today may well be an effort to write history in reverse.

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Relic of Our Days

We have a friend in the Bronx but no carfare
Between us: this be no matter for surprise—
A nickel is five cents. Uncle Sam is no
Relative of ours. We can't borrow.
Also! It is true that there is a man
In Honolulu that has the same name
As you have (Brother, can you spare a stamp?)
Also! A man by my name produces in
Hollywood. No doubt, he is a fine man!
People have so told me. What does
He manufacture? Laughs! Very good ones
(Also) I am told. But who has told us?
The man in Wall Street I saw hailing
A taxi? The Communist (who said the tower
Of Babel was falling)? The man who eats
Steaks at the plank beefed restaurant.
I am sorry: none of these men have spoken to me
During this lifetime. They have not
Been properly introduced; they are
Distant. (This is not my fault—
So far as I can see it.) I have tried:
They have said yes (You are worried?
A little matter of a roof over your head?
Tomorrow we will fix it! I know a man
Who knows a woman who had a child by another
Man whom I have never met. He will fix things!—
With that there is another drink. There are
Always more drinks but no food in the house,
Nor a roof that is constant, nor happiness
In the eyes of a friend). Together we search
For no substance; its relic is out of hand.

NORMAN MACLEOD.

New Phase in Cuba

Batista Begins to Remember His Revolutionary Origin

OBED BROOKS

Havana.

ON SEPTEMBER 1 the newspaper *La Prensa* in Havana printed a sensational rumor, and was promptly suppressed for it. It announced that on September 4, the fifth anniversary of the present regime, Colonel Batista would dissolve the Congress, remove Laredo Bru from the presidency, and put Dr. Grau San Martin in his place.

Such a change could be received with enthusiasm if it came as a result of the developing democratic movement in Cuba. Grau San Martin, now in Miami, still represents to large masses in Cuba the authentic spirit of the revolt against Machado. And the Congress is dominated by swindlers for whom no one has any respect. But the democratic leaders in Cuba had no desire to see this happen as a coup on September 4. The printing of such a rumor in *La Prensa* was not designed to help the rapidly expanding forces which are ready to unite under the leadership of Grau San Martin. On the contrary, this excited rumor-mongering, which one encounters everywhere in Havana, serves the purposes of those reactionaries who have been alarmed by the increasing strength of the democratic movement and by the prospects of a constitutional convention, and who would like to see a new autocracy come into power before it is too late. They want to frighten Cuban and American business men with reports like that printed in *La Prensa* in order to win their support for some kind of authoritarian coup.

One of the most interesting aspects of this situation, as the story in *La Prensa* suggests, is the changed position of Batista. The big sugar men, Montalvo and Casanova, and the director of the most powerful newspaper, *Diario de la Marina*, Pepin Rivero, leaders of the fight against the democratic movement, are now also trying to remove Batista from power. Batista completely betrayed the revolution of 1933; he suppressed the labor movement and broke up strikes with methods as bloody as those used by Machado. But Batista is not now the center of reaction. The men who are working energetically both in Cuba and the United States to bring about his downfall are not acting in the interests of the Cuban people. They want to see him out because he has been making—although it is easy to exaggerate the extent and dependability of this change—important concessions to the growing democratic movement, and they are afraid that if he retreats too far, it will mean the end of their own power in Cuba.

The first, and perhaps the most important, reason for Batista's retreat is the economic

crisis. The sale of sugar has fallen badly, both in price and amount. The national budget shows an increasing deficit. Rents have gone up over 80 percent in the last two years. Prices have fallen—except those of necessities, which have increased and made life almost impossible for the poor. There is no relief system. The new taxes which the government has proposed to solve its budgetary difficulties have been received with mass discontent and indignation. It was a situation like this which finally made possible the overthrow of Machado. Batista saw what happened to Machado, and has taken a different course. Blas Roca, head of the Cuban Communist Party, suggests that it might be compared with the summoning of the Estates General by Louis XVI when the French government was bankrupt. A democratic Constitution followed in France. In Cuba plans for a new electoral census and a constitutional convention are definitely under way.

Batista has shown signs of moving toward the people only because the people of Cuba in recent months have given such unmistakable evidence of strength and will to action. Because of the repressive laws, it has not been possible to express this in direct political terms; it has taken the form of the great mass meetings of the first of May, in defense of loyalist Spain, in homage to the Cárdenas government in Mexico. The popular papers are full of news from Spain; the phonographs in the cafes play *No Pasaran*; even the great beer companies are forced to take an active part in support of the loyalists. The feeling is such that pro-fascists cannot carry on open and public activity. Because it took the wrong side of the struggle of the Cuban people for independence from Spain, the Catholic Church in Cuba cannot exert the influence in mobilizing support for Franco that is exerted among Catholics in the United States.

Because he has permitted this sentiment to grow and find expression, the reactionaries are turning from Batista and exaggerating the dangers of a leftist government in order to get support for a putsch against him in the next month or two. Batista has always been on bad personal terms with Sumner Welles. The semi-independent army chiefs in the provinces, where there is great destitution and, as compared with Havana, complete and brutal denial of all civil rights, are at odds with Batista and ready to combine against him. The upper classes have never accepted him as one of themselves, and have tolerated him up to now only as an alternative to the popular government they fear is developing under him. The loyalty of the senators and representa-

tives is only to their salaries and perquisites and opportunities for graft. It costs them a great deal to get elected, and in the present economic crisis they are finding it difficult to pay back their supporters in money and jobs. They are jealous of Batista and the army because he controls so many jobs.

Under these circumstances it is not strange that Batista is beginning to remember his origins and to use again the phrases of the revolution. In his September 4 address he spoke of the "upper-class obstinacy" that brought on the present trouble in Spain. He said that the army was pledged to see that the people had bread. He attacked militarism, recalling the books of Remarque, and alliances between the army and reaction, mentioning Paul Muni's version of the life of Emile Zola.

Among the leaders of the left parties in Havana there is considerable optimism. The legalization of the Communist Party, just announced, is an important development. The trade unions are negotiating for legal recognition and increased powers. Despite the closing of *La Prensa* there is considerable freedom of expression in print. The return of Dr. Grau San Martin to Cuba may occur at any moment. This optimism is not a result of the few concessions that have been made so far to the strength of the popular movement, for conditions are still very bad throughout the island, but from the expectation that this movement may end in the establishment of a new Constitution which will prevent dictatorial rule, make Congress something besides a means of enrichment for its members, protect the interests of the people in the national economy, and provide effective guarantees of civil rights. The principal political struggle in Cuba is to see that the proposed constitutional assembly is actually called, and that delegates who really represent the people are elected to it.

If the Constitution is to be achieved, it is important that a working unity be established among those who want it. Juan Marinello, leader of the Union Revolucionaria, a rapidly growing proletarian party, is ready to join with the Cuban Revolutionary Party, the National Agrarian Party, and other forces in establishing a single party under the leadership of Grau San Martin. On his way back from the Youth Congress Marinello discussed this with Grau San Martin in Miami, but no decision has yet been reached. Grau San Martin has great prestige among the people in Cuba and is a man of complete integrity of purpose. He is not a good political organizer, however, and not a theoretician, and he is a little afraid that he might be dominated by the Communists within a single party, and that this would cost him favor in the United States. Even, however, if a single party is not created, the Communists and Marinello's Union Revolucionaria are ready to give full support to a movement under Grau San Martin toward a democratic constitutional government. And if the reactionaries do not block this by bringing about a coup within the next few months, it seems to have a very good chance of success.