

The State of the Nation

THIS DEPARTMENT, which NEW MASSES presents weekly, is the joint work of a group of correspondents who send us a letter each week telling about the state of their part of the nation. As more correspondents write in, our coverage will increase. We invite our readers to send their contributions of significant happenings, anecdotes, etc., to "The State of the Nation," NEW MASSES.

Tom Joad Speaks Up

OKLAHOMA CITY.—Tom Joad came back home last week and testified to his people's demand for land and bread, at an open hearing on the farm tenant problem held by the Farm Security Administration.

Tom Joad was Otis Nation, international representative of the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers (CIO) and state organizer of the Oklahoma Tenant Farmers Union, which is the only organized group of tenant farmers in the Sooner State. The CIO organizer gave five good reasons for the plight of the wandering Oklahomans in quest of land: the high interest rates of the banks "which move in like a flock of vultures after a crop failure or a bad year"; the overploughing of the grasslands to furnish grain "for the war to make the world safe for democracy"; the rapid growth of tractor farming; the Triple A and inducements for the big landholders to chase the tenants off the land, hire them back as day laborers, and still receive the AAA benefits; and the rapid growth of corporate, absentee landlord farming.

Nation said that giving the tenant farmers, sharecroppers, and agricultural workers the chance to own their own homes and work their own land would spell democracy. "It will mean something to us folks then when we speak of the Constitution. We will have something. We will be part of it. We will know what the word democracy means from having it. We will have kids that are healthy and well fed and that's democracy too."

The Finns in America

ABERDEEN, WASH.—The Northwest has perhaps more Finlanders than any other section of the United States, with the largest concentration in coastal lumber-shipping and fishing towns—Coos Bay, Astoria, Aberdeen, and the cities of the lower Columbia River. Here an especially heavy campaign for the aid of the Helsinki regime is being launched. Most of the local government officials are on committees, the petty bankers, the newspaper editors, owners of hardware stores, in fact everyone who is not Finnish. Members of the vigilante societies, the various local Better Business Builders, for instance, have been openly demanding that the United States send over troops to defend the poor Finns in Finland. But the local Finlanders see a different picture.

In an open letter to the press the Finnish Workers Club of Astoria asks protection from

these vigilante societies and their banker, newspaper editor supporters. It points out that the Astoria *Daily Budget* is whipping up against the Finn groups a hysteria similar to that which preceded the wrecking of the Finnish Hall in Aberdeen on December 2; a hysteria which played its part in the murder of Mrs. Dick Law, herself a Finn. At the same time the Aberdeen Finnish Workers Federation has brought suit against county and town officials and members of the Better Business Builders of Aberdeen, charging them with having permitted and conspired in the \$30,000 damage done to the hall.

GWTW Successor

CHICAGO.—*The Birth of a Nation*, precursor of today's *Gone With the Wind*, was produced in the midst of the First World War hysteria in 1915. A few weeks ago, a Chicago revival of *The Birth of a Nation*, riding the GWTW wave, was halted by police. Theater owners, with seventy-five showings of the notorious Ku Klux Klan picture booked, appealed to the courts, relying upon an old injunction restraining police from interfering with the picture.

On February 28, Superior Judge Donald S. McKinlay lifted the police ban, ordered Police Commissioner John Allman to show cause why he should not be held in contempt for violation of the old injunction. *The Birth of a Nation* had been given judicial approval in Chicago on March 5, 1917—a few weeks before America's entry into the First World War. An omen?

Chicago Facts

CHICAGO.—Socially significant notes: One out of five persons in Chicago gets adequate dental care, according to Dr. Harold W. Welch, president, Chicago Dental Society, who "hopes to bridge the gap between patients and the dentist." . . . January milk sales totaled 160,496,358 pounds, 27 percent over last September, with the number of distributors increased by 6 percent and the greatest milk surplus in years in the Chicago area; but retail milk prices remain at 13 cents a quart, 2 cents up from last September and beyond the reach of unemployed. . . . Inadequate zoning laws, responsible for much of the city's slums and sub-marginal housing, were dramatically revealed by a study showing thirty-four square miles, or 16 percent of the city's area, zoned for apartment hotels, which, if built, would house 42,172,412 persons.

Public Nuisances

MIAMI, FLA.—*Time* mag recently ran a great story on Col. Joseph Stehlin, noted Miami civic leader who fought against the Red Army with United States troops at the close of the last World War. Colonel "Joe" enjoyed the publicity but at the moment he's suffering some reversals. It seems Joe is connected with the Brook Club, a gambling joint in the Miami area; the state officials have cracked down on him and his club, calling the outfit a "well known public nuisance." They also say that Colonel Joe's legal residence is unknown, which

makes Miamians wonder how he happened to want to be city commissioner last year.

Miamians rubbed their eyes at a headline that appeared in a recent issue of the Miami *Herald*: "Black Opinion May Be Fought." It referred to the recent opinion handed down by the U. S. Supreme Court staying a death sentence for four Negroes in Broward County and ordering a new trial on the ground that the men were coerced through third degree into making a confession. What puzzles Miamians is just how this opinion is to be fought. Some National Guardsmen, it is reported, are afraid they are to be called out on a new secession drive to separate Florida from the Union. Or maybe the *Herald* is going to bring charges against Justice Black. At any rate the paper is beginning to doubt that Black was ever a Klansman.

As Vermont Goes

SPRINGFIELD, VT.—Vermont's machine tool industry in Springfield is booming with war orders. Farmers with any qualifying experience are scrambling for the low-pay jobs, hoping to get something ahead to meet interest payments on their mortgages.

At a recent meeting of Dairy Farmers Union members it was announced that the Borden Co. and National Dairies had contributed to Herbie Hoover's committee to make Finland safe for Butcher Mannerheim. "That's our money they're giving away!" exclaimed the wife of a good union member. And that's the prevailing sentiment. The Green Mountain Boys are *not* coming!

Politics in Montana

GREAT FALLS, MONT.—The high (or low) note of this week was the indictment of Attorney General Harrison J. Freebourn by a federal grand jury in Great Falls. The indictment, which was greeted with glee by the ACM (Anaconda Copper Mining) press throughout the state, accused the attorney general of income tax evasion. It revived a shopworn bribery-acceptance charge which had failed to cause the impeachment of the attorney general by the State Legislature last year. In a statement printed by the labor and progressive papers, Freebourn accused Anaconda Copper and Montana Power of an attempted frameup. The indictment was timed to influence the primary elections. Less than a week after the indictment Freebourn filed his candidacy for United States senator on the Democratic ticket. To date he is the only one contesting B. K. Wheeler's candidacy. Wheeler filed several weeks back. Freebourn is generally considered a reliable labor supporter. His record in office substantiates this opinion.

Montana's gift to the fascist Silver Shirts, Jacob Thorkelson, announced his candidacy to succeed himself in Congress. All lovers of democracy, social security, and enemies of race hatred take notice. Even the ACM press was shamed into hiding on the back pages the news of his candidacy.

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What's That, Mr. Jackson?

How many liberal lances will be broken this week upholding Attorney General Jackson's defense of J. Edgar Hoover remains to be seen. The *Nation* and *New Republic* are at this writing also penning pieces about their champion, who, they assured us, would put an end to all this nonsense of Mr. Hoover's. Plain people the country over feel considerable alarm at Mr. Jackson's baldfaced defense of the FBI warm-up in Detroit. Mr. Hoover's raiders, trusty ax in hand, did their duty under orders, the attorney general says in reply to Senator Norris' letter of inquiry. Mr. Norris felt he could not help "but reach the conclusion that there is some well grounded fear that the activities of this bureau are overstepping and overreaching the legitimate objects for which it was created."

Not Mr. Jackson; he has no such fears! "I have reviewed the facts," he retorted, "... and I find nothing to justify any charge of misconduct against the Federal Bureau of Investigation." That declaration raises some interesting points. Does Mr. Jackson believe it was entirely proper to raid homes at 5:00 a.m.? To shackle defendants? Citizens who have not even been tried in court, at that? Does he believe that show of force is entirely within the province of his department? Or of any governmental agency?

It is hard for us to believe that Mr. Jackson really thinks the way he talks. After all, Mr. Hoover has written his record; we are not the only ones aghast at his abuse of power. The "Stork Club detective" has many outstanding Americans cocking a wary eye his way. In addition to Congressmen Marcantonio, Coffee, and Senator Norris, numerous public spirited bodies, labor groupings, have talked up.

Mr. Jackson and Mr. Murphy—who ordered the Detroit raids—have evident differences, chiefly in tactics. One stumbled because of haste: the other says let's move with surer tread, a bit slower, more shrewdly, and we will not arouse the public against us. Both are behind Mr. Roosevelt who—as Ludwell Denny pointed out in the *Scripps-Howard* service last week—himself gave the signal for the "Red drive." As *NEW MASSES* editors, we know that has not let up. The grand jury in Washington is still sitting, laboriously working up indictments against those who don't see eye to eye with FDR's plans for a nice, profitable Wall Street war.

La Guardia and the Bankers

MONDAY, March 4, opened in Manhattan with a dreary rain but the sun shone through the windows of the Bankers Club. There was a headline in the *Herald Tribune*: "Mayor Bans Strikes after Transit Unity."

"No employee's status will depend upon his affiliation with any labor organization," said Mayor LaGuardia, discussing the transport workers' position under the city's new "transit unification" plan. And: "The right, therefore, to strike against the government is not and cannot be recognized."

Trade unionists are accustomed to such pronunciamientos from bankrupt financial fakers, Louis XIV Republicans, and fellow riders of the (royal) purple sage, John Nance Garner. But this labor-baiting declaration coming from Fiorello LaGuardia, American Labor Party candidate, the liberal who was regarded as a possible running mate of the great FDR, is one more indication of the sellout of the New Deal by its former supporters. LaGuardia's open shop, yellow dog statement has aroused indignation among the million-odd trade unionists in New York City, their families and friends. The bankers' papers have front-paged their new friend's blow at labor, applauded the trick of "transit unification" which they hope will turn a track walker's or conductor's strike for better wages into a "revolt against the government." It's a shabby dodge that fools no workingman.

So Blue the Rose

THE fate of the American Labor Party is dear to all progressives, not only in New York, but nationally. Dear, not so much because of its performance, but because of its promise. Its leadership under Alex Rose has inspired little confidence; it has been weak, vacillating, lacking political foresight or initiative—in short, downright ruinous.

For that reason most genuine progressives rejoiced at the victory of the anti-Rose membership in the recent New York County meeting. That was a victory of the rank and file. Mr. Rose and his pro-war cohorts took a resounding trimming when Eugene Connolly was elected chairman. The actual vote was more than two to one against the Rose program. But typical of the anti-democratic attitude of the previous New York County leadership, the Rose supporters challenged the authority of Herman Hoffman, election supervisor, who had declared Connolly elected. Mr. Hoffman replied that his function for the session had been decided by Supreme Court Justice Wasservogel in a decision several days previously.

The full background and present status of the ALP and its great implications for all American labor merit detailed treatment and *NEW MASSES* will publish an appropriate article shortly. But this much is obvious to all who have even cursorily scanned the situation within the ALP: the Rose-Dubinsky-Greenberg setup, though making a furious

fanfare about the Red issue, has diligently kept bona-fide CIO representation from positions of leadership. They want a Labor Party without labor. Consider their knifing of the Quill campaign, for one instance. Furthermore, to press their pro-war, pro-Roosevelt stand, they are more than willing to split the party. They are ready to destroy it entirely, rather than to permit the rank-and-file the kind of party they want. The entire commercial press acclaimed Mr. Rose's statement after the election that he is summoning thirty of his "one-man club" leaders to fight the decision of the majority. As Mr. Connolly put it, "When a minority loses in convention the American way is for that group to abide by the decision of the majority." Not, however, Mr. Rose. And he is the tribune who sounds off regularly about totalitarianism. Labor and progressives know what the "rule or ruin" slogan means and they see that legend inscribed on the banners of the Rose grouping.

Dollars and Rubles

GREAT BRITAIN this week notified forty American oil companies that "navicert" authorizations for the shipment of lubricating oils would not be granted for Belgium, Holland, and Denmark. Presumably American goods are being trans-shipped by neutrals to Germany; or perhaps the Allies are alarmed at the terrific bid which American capitalists are making for trade hegemony among the neutrals. Sir Ashton Gwatkin, adviser to the British Ministry of Economic Warfare, and Prof. Charles Rist, ace French economist, have arrived for discussions on trade irritations. One report says that the Allies wish to prevent the flow of gasoline, copper, and metals to the Soviet Union; they're trying to persuade Americans to intensify the moral embargo against the USSR and are themselves thinking of interfering with Soviet transports on the Pacific. On the other hand, the Soviet Union is buying heavily in the American market and paying with the yellow metal. Undoubtedly, British displeasure with American trade was one of the items in that three-hour luncheon between Ambassador Laurence Steinhardt and premier of the USSR, Molotov. American policy coincides fully with the Allied anti-Soviet orientation; but it remains to be seen whether pressure from London and Paris can persuade American business men to deny themselves lucrative trade.

Congress and Finmarks

TO USE a military metaphor, Mr. Welles is being supported by an excellent artillery. As he infiltrates into Europe, silk top hat and all, he's being covered from behind by a wonderful barrage of bullets: gold bullets. Congress has given the Export-Import Bank increased loan authorization. The President hurried back from a survey of the Panama Canal (he asks for doubling the defenses there) to sign the order for Mannerheim's millions. Perhaps even more important