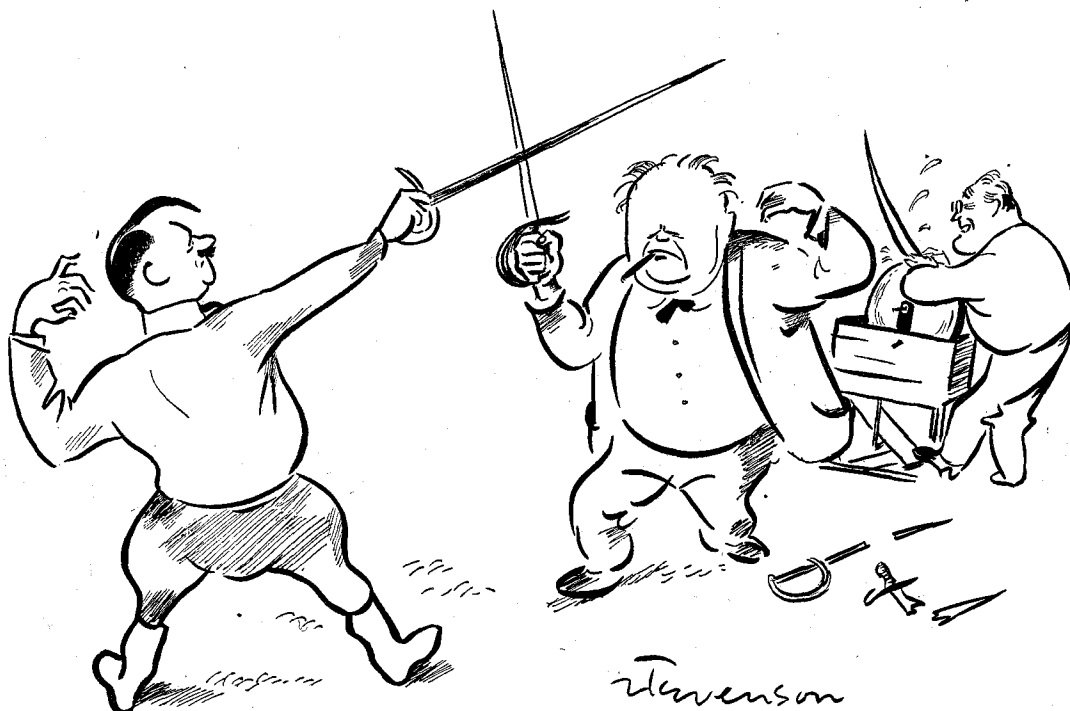


people, whose interests in that period were bound up with the development of industrial capitalism. Wrote the great realist, Jefferson, in a letter to Lafayette: "Our Embargo has produced one very happy permanent effect. It has set us all on domestic manufactures, and will, I verily believe, reduce our future demands on England fully one half." This embargo, passed in retaliation for the British Orders in Council, which practically outlawed American commerce from the seas, also prepared the way for completing the struggle for independence in the War of 1812. By repudiating Jefferson's embargo President Roosevelt repudiated what is best in the American tradition and made common cause with the enemies of democracy then and now.

It should be noted that the whole struggle between Federalists and Anti-Federalists was not over whether America was to take the path of capitalist development, but over the social and political character of that development. The issue was whether all the wealth and political power of the nation were to be concentrated in the hands of an oligarchy of merchants, bondholders, and land speculators, or whether capitalism was to move forward on the basis of wide dissemination of property ownership and democratic rights. (Incidentally, Jefferson, though himself an owner of slaves, favored the abolition of slavery.) It was thanks to the movement which Jefferson led that this country was saved from a bourgeois despotism after the pattern of the Bonaparte dictatorship.

Jefferson's nationalism was an integral part of his internationalism. He was a great fighter for American democracy because he supported the battle for democracy in all countries. In this too he was faithful to the spirit of 1776. Even before the outbreak of the war for independence the Second Continental Congress had sent an address to the Irish people condemning their oppression by Britain and offering asylum to Irish political refugees. The Anti-Federalists under Jefferson fought to prevent the betrayal of this principle of fraternal solidarity with all peoples struggling against tyranny. President Roosevelt, in his Jackson Day address on Jan. 8, 1940, for the first time since he took office embraced the leader of reaction, Alexander Hamilton, and while also including Thomas Jefferson in the exalted company of his heroes, criticized the latter because "in the light of later knowledge the theories of the French revolutionists at times overexcited his practical judgment." The direct contrary is true. In the controversy over the Constitution Jefferson, who was away in France at the time, had shown some confusion concerning the real issue, though he urged the inclusion of a bill of rights. Later, in the stormy debate over Hamilton's plan for the assumption by the federal government of the public debt (a plan for enriching the rich and impoverishing the poor), Jefferson, while critical of Hamilton's proposals, was disposed to conciliate him. It was the French Revolution that dispelled the mists, that gave to Jefferson's practical judgment clarity and



strength, and inspired the common people of America to take up the fight against the Hamiltonian despotism.

It is difficult to exaggerate the extent to which events in Europe directly influenced domestic issues during the early years of our republic. Contrary to the official historians, neither the Federalists nor the Anti-Federalists were isolationists. The orientation of the former was, as we have seen, toward reactionary Britain, of the latter toward revolutionary France. This division corresponded to the class cleavage described by Jefferson in the letter to Madison quoted above. Though Tom Paine had sent the key of the fallen Bastille to Washington and written: "That the principles of America opened the Bastille is not to be doubted," many of the self-designated custodians of those principles regarded even the first faltering steps of the French Revolution with suspicion and hostility. Edmund Burke's attack on the Revolution, published in England only a few months after the storming of the Bastille, had become practically an official Federalist manifesto. It was the appearance in this country in 1792 of Paine's magnificent reply to Burke, *The Rights of Man*, published with an approving letter by Jefferson and reprinted serially in many newspapers, that brought to a head the struggle between the hosts of Hamilton and of Jefferson. And as the French Revolution advanced, there was an electric response in this country. "One prolonged, triumphant shout went up from the masses," writes Bowers in *Jefferson and Hamilton*. "The 'people of no particular importance' somehow felt that the victory was theirs. They had been a little indifferent, these men of the shops, taverns, wharves, and the frontier, over the disputed financial and economic policies of their country, but they could understand the meaning of 'liberty, equality, fraternity.' It meant democracy." "Tammany was the very heart of the French movement in New York,"

Bowers tells us. And in all parts of the country there sprang up Democratic Clubs, similar to the popular societies of Paris, which became the foundation of Jefferson's movement and of his future Republican Party. Thus the French Revolution had the effect of *bringing the broad masses into active struggle to fulfill the promise of American democracy*.

The special historical conditions which caused bourgeois democracy in this country to develop in relatively peaceful fashion made it difficult for Jefferson to accept the hard necessities of the French Revolution when it entered its Jacobin phase. But though in letters to friends he at times wrote bitterly of Robespierre, he refused to join the enemies of the Revolution. "My own affections have been deeply wounded by some of the martyrs to this cause," he wrote in a letter in 1793, "but rather than it should have failed, I would have seen half the earth desolated; were there but an Adam and Eve left in every country, and left free, it would be better than as it now is." And in 1823, only three years before his death, in a letter to his old adversary, John Adams, he expressed his faith that the democratic revolution would, despite setbacks, ultimately triumph everywhere.

Patriot, social revolutionist, internationalist—all were united in the towering genius of Jefferson. Within the limitations of his class and time he gave new dimensions to democracy and to the common man a new sense of dignity and strength. The popular democracy that came to power with Jefferson continued to march forward, save for the four-year relapse under John Quincy Adams, breaking into new frontiers under a man sprung from the people, Andrew Jackson. But a cloud no bigger than a man's hand was already rising over the horizon—the slavery issue.

A. B. MAGIL.

In a forthcoming issue Mr. Magil will discuss the further development of the democratic struggle and the conflict over slavery.

# Labor's Search for Plenty

A decade of heroic trade-union struggle against monopoly and craftbound, timid leadership. New techniques to meet the industrial Goliaths. The great test ahead.

FOR twenty years the United States rested between wars. It emerged from the first catastrophe flushed with imperialist strength: the breathing spell offered opportunity to prepare for the future showdown in which the rulers of America hoped to secure for themselves the sovereign guardianship of the world. In the beginning, the Great Boom of the twenties persuaded many to accept briefly the myth that this country had finally achieved the liberty and abundance of the American Dream; but in the succeeding disillusionment, the myth gave way to bitter hopelessness followed by a blustering pretense that somehow everything would turn out for the best. Hastily the Dream was redefined to glorify deprivation and misery. And still the rationalizations indulged in by the arbiters of American opinion failed to persuade the people to repudiate their birthright even though its promise went unfulfilled. The determination of the majority to win their rightful inheritance lived on; it was most forcibly expressed in the struggles of the working class.

These struggles were to be momentous. But as the people moved forward, the strength of their class adversaries also augmented: the forces of ownership, which had dragged the country into industrial and agrarian crisis, now sought to resolve the tragic tensions of a moribund social system by means of political terrorism and war. For their part, the workers and those among the farmers and weary middle classes who took leadership from the workers, fought to retain victories already wrested from their opponents, demanding in addition broader gains that would assure them a democratic, peaceful life.

At its outset, the post-war epoch was not propitious for labor. Though the official labor movement seemed outwardly strong in 1920, it suffered from leadership at once craft-bound and timid. When industry, backed by the national and state governments, launched its counter-offensive in 1919, the titular heads of labor capitulated without protest. That year they abandoned the steel workers; they betrayed the railroad strikers in 1922; they retreated before the coal operators in 1924 onward. The American Federation of Labor was paralyzed, no longer offering the slightest protection against the open-shoppers. Concessions won in the past by the most appalling sacrifices were relinquished by subservient labor lieutenants anxious to prove that they were above all not "trouble makers." Only a small class-conscious nucleus in the key industries of mining, steel, textile, and marine resisted. And these militants, for the most part members of the Trade Union Unity League led by William Z. Foster, were hunted down by Federation chieftains with an avidity not

surpassed by the most anti-labor employers.

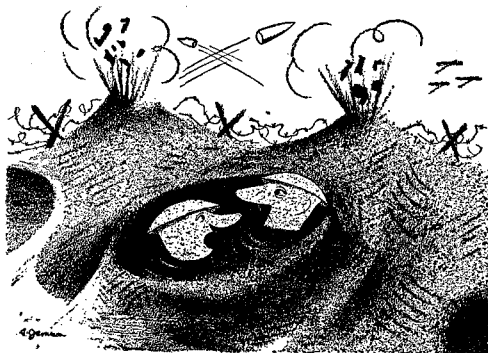
The twenties was an arid time, when a fog of cynicism and casuistry blotted out all meaningful horizons. Not until capitalism had been revealed in all its impotence, not until American economy had plunged into the abyss of crisis after 1929, did the people stir. Haltingly, tentatively, they reasserted their will for a better world. The working class, like a drugged giant slowly regaining consciousness, began to grope for unity beyond the nightmare of degradation. Within four years, labor had sufficiently revived to force concessions from the incoming New Deal government. The young administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt, with graceful hypocrisy, seemed late in 1933 to encourage organization and collective bargaining. Glib though the promises were, workers took them to heart; and they acted to give content to fine words. What were considered by the government easy and calculatedly empty gestures that would placate a working class growing ever more restive, suddenly appeared in the light of labor action, rash and over-generous. The government, once it discovered that its commitments were taken seriously, immediately reneged and rushed posthaste to the rescue of the great industrialists and financiers. But labor fought on. Through legalistic subterfuges, the statutes were hastily purged of embarrassing admissions of workers' rights. Still the attack continued. By 1937, the citadels of the open shop—steel, automobile, rubber, electrical manufacturing, marine, glass—inviolate during the twenties, fell before the onslaught.

The advance was unprecedented. Its success had been the result of new organizational forms, the outgrowth of the needs of workers in a highly industrialized and centralized productive system. And with the victory of industrial unionism, the former outworn patterns superimposed on the American labor movement by a defeatist leadership were smashed. Gone in large part was the pre-eminent position of Gompersism, the philosophy

of propitiating the captains of monopoly by submitting to their commands. The Committee for Industrial Organization, born of working-class necessity, freed labor from the confusion and disunity of craft unionism. Industrial organization alone provided means powerful enough to force the great corporations to recognize their employees' demands.

Heroic struggles accompanied the organizational drive of the middle thirties. The West Coast maritime strike of 1934 with the culminating general strike in San Francisco, the abortive textile walkout on the eastern seaboard of the same year, the first CIO action of 1936 in the rubber shops of Akron, the march of steel organizers into the "Little Siberias" of western Pennsylvania, the dramatic campaign against General Motors early in 1937—these landmarks and more are part of labor's proud pageant of sacrifice and courage. And as workers pressed forward, new forms of action evolved, forms particularly suited to the complex task of shutting down the vast plants. The sit-down strike—answer to brutal attacks on exposed picket lines—first appeared in the rubber mills of Akron, spontaneously conceived from the hazy recollections of workers' legend. The new strategy underwent continuous improvement, until the sit-down emerged in its perfected form, with carefully arranged communications, supporting picket lines, functioning commissaries, entertainment, sanitation. The flying picket squad was the response to the demand for greater mobility; the sound truck played an increasingly important role in keeping strikers and the community informed and united; picketing by telephone enabled a union to attack even the well-insulated offices hidden away in skyscraper buildings.

Labor showed ingenuity and resourcefulness: it sought and found ways to meet the Goliaths of modern industry on equal terms. Even the employers' considerable advantage of controlling the business press was somewhat overcome as unions developed their own newspapers, and labor journalism began to leave behind the days when a handful of ink-smudged, poorly written papers gave irregular and doubtful encouragement to the unions. In their place almost every large union and many locals issued papers that were increasingly timely and well-printed. Now the CIO supplied its members with economic analyses, with attractive pamphlets and leaflets. Now unions pushed ahead with hospital plans, medical services, educational programs, sports and cultural activities, and many provided legal departments to serve the membership. Organizers were carefully trained and selected for ability and resourcefulness. The unions increasingly took upon their shoulders the problems of the unemployed, securing relief for



"Aw, let's go home"

Jamison