

N.A.M.'s REAL WAR AIMS

The double-talk at the recent convention added up to defeatism. What W. P. Witherow said and what he meant. Mr. Prentis quoted everybody but himself. His threat of a "disguised fascist dictatorship."

SUPPOSE a labor organization, say the CIO, held a convention in New York entitled the War Convention of the CIO. Suppose that instead of discussing how to increase war production and strengthen other phases of the war effort, speaker after speaker attacked as fascist all regulatory measures designed to speed the output of planes, tanks, guns, etc. Suppose one speaker declared that the war against Hitler was secondary to the war against our own government, and others echoed him. Suppose that speakers denounced all business leaders as racketeers and fascist agitators. Suppose they sneered at the speeches of Secretary of Commerce Jones, accused the government of attempting to smuggle the British system into this country, and linked Churchill with Hitler and Mussolini.

All this would get big headlines in the papers. There would be hot indignant editorials demanding that the CIO be suppressed, its leaders tried for sedition or treason. Appeals for action would be made to the President, the Department of Justice, and Congress.

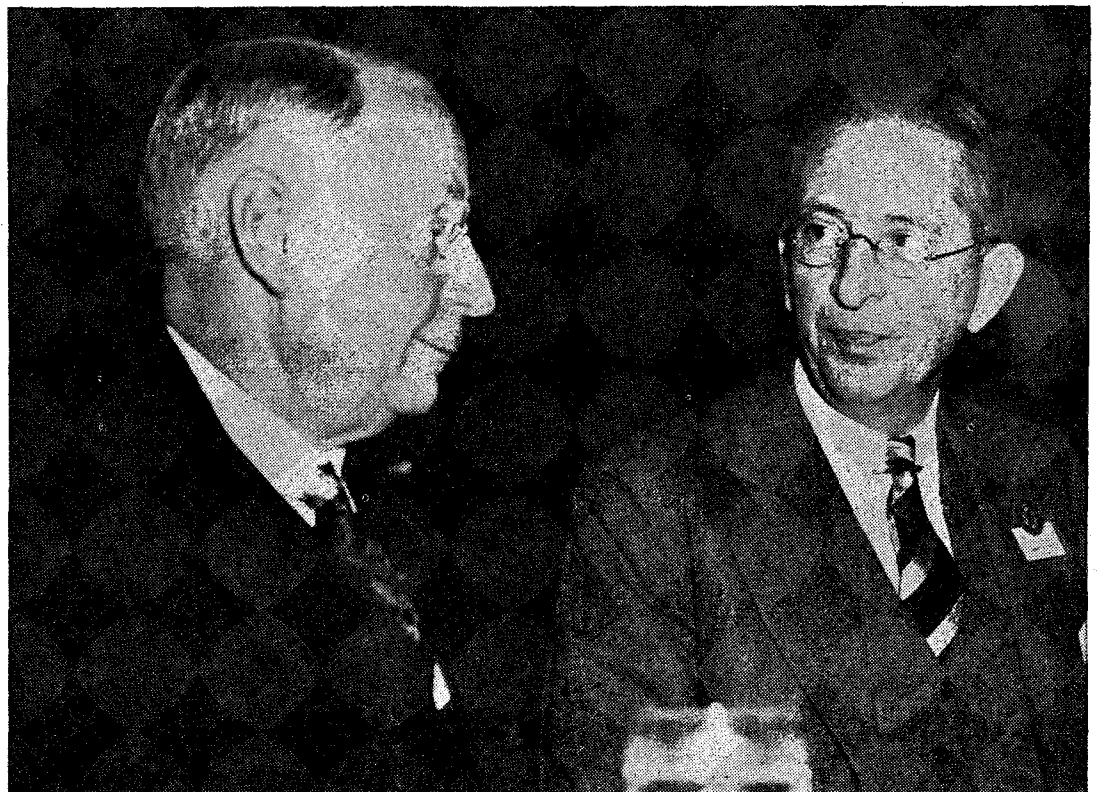
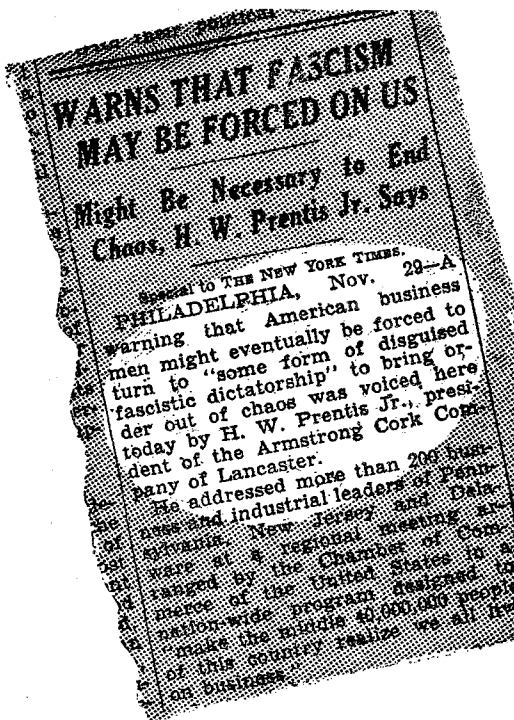
The above speeches with slight modifications were actually made in New York—but not at a CIO convention. The war measures required for organizing production were attacked not as fascist, but as socialistic or communistic. It was not business leaders who were denounced as racketeers and fascists but labor leaders. It was not Secretary Jones who was a favorite target, but Vice-President Wal-

lace. There were hostile warnings not against Britain, but against another great ally, the Soviet Union; and it was her leaders, Lenin and Stalin, not Churchill, who were put in the company of Hitler and Mussolini. The annual convention of the National Association of Manufacturers got big headlines and big stories, but somehow none of them managed to convey the simple fact that, except for the addresses by government officials, nine-tenths of the speeches were permeated with the spirit of defeatism. We can be sure, however, that this fact did not escape certain students of American affairs in Berlin and Tokyo.

THE ostensible purpose of the NAM convention was stated by its president, W. P. Witherow, in his opening speech: "We are assembled here mainly to discuss ways and means to increase our war production, to speed up our armaments program, and to keep America strong." If any such matters were discussed, it must have been in the privacy of hotel rooms and in subterranean sessions after midnight. Donald Nelson, chairman of the War Production Board, did discuss the problem of increasing production at the closing dinner of the convention; Ferdinand C. Eberstadt, WPB vice-chairman, told the delegates about the new controlled materials plan; Highland G. Batcheller, chief of the WPB's iron and steel branch, talked on "Steel to Beat the Axis." But as for the NAM tycoons them-

selves, they kept gasping for breath denouncing as socialism every measure to increase production and make America strong.

Witherow's speech was, in fact, a marvel of double-talk. You could almost literally skip every other paragraph and the result would be two speeches, one saying the direct opposite of the other. For instance: "Let us seek to strengthen the position of our Commander-in-Chief, of Congress, and of our military and production leaders in the most stupendous task of all time." And then: "I should like to call attention to the trend toward socialized forms of control and the necessity of controlling those trends now. . . . There's the \$25,000 limitation on salaries. . . . This idea was unblushingly borrowed from the public platform of the Communist Party in 1928. . . ." Or consider this: "Let industry leave no stone unturned to gain national unity as well as industrial unity. . . . Anything that gives labor a black eye with the public is a curb on production." And then: "Reformers have recently been much concerned—and Congress has been agitated if not concerned—over the poll tax. There's another poll tax that needs a lot of attention—the poll tax that union racketeers are charging thousands of American citizens before they can help fight the war for the Federal Union." On the subject of war aims Witherow likewise blew hot: "I believe with Secretary Hull in the promise of emancipation and self-determination we



The clipping reproduced here is from the New York "Times" of Nov. 30, 1938. The speaker referred to, H. W. Prentis, Jr., appears above (left) with Lamot du Pont, who was the most influential figure at the NAM Resolutions Committee's secret meeting of September 17—exposed by Bruce Minton in "New Masses" of November 17.

must hold out to the war-torn nations of the world." And cold: "I am not fighting for a quart of milk for every Hottentot, or for a TVA on the Danube, or for governmental handouts of free Utopia." Here is the old, ugly, chauvinist isolationism over again.

But most of the speakers didn't bother with any such devious balancing of water on both shoulders. They frankly challenged the war program; as I pointed out in my article last week, one of them, Prof. Harley L. Lutz of Princeton University, went so far as to say: "No one need feel concern over the final outcome of the military war; but there is reason for the gravest concern over the outcome of our civil war—the war of the screwy social reformers against the American way of life." And they incited class hate against the men and women of labor who seek to join with the majority of patriotic employers in an all-out effort for victory.

It is, of course, impossible to say to what extent these views represent merely the last-ditch stand of business-as-usual and to what extent they represent outright defeatism; the point is that the one, if pursued aggressively enough, inevitably merges into the other. That the convention did not by any means speak for all or even a majority of the industrial leaders of the country was obliquely indicated by several speakers who deplored the "defeatism" of many businessmen (by which was meant their refusal to fight the government) and urged that the NAM should not trim its policies to meet objections from the business community.

It is significant that the heaviest barrage of what should have been entitled the Negotiated Peace Congress of a Minority of American Industry was laid down against the crux of America's war effort, the battle for production, for a total war economy. This was most nakedly expressed by that pretentious poisoner of the youthful mind, Professor Lutz. He called for a return to the dog-eat-dog days of the past when the monopolies rode herd over their competitors. Taxation in accordance with ability to pay he described as "the most potent of all weapons for the destruction of private property and private initiative, and for the introduction of the socialist state." And he warned that "plans are under way for a sweeping reconstruction of the economy in the name of the war need." Blasts against "government regimentation" and "wartime planners" also spurted from such NAM big guns as J. Howard Pew of the Sun Oil Co., brother of the Republican boss of Pennsylvania and member of the executive committee of the defunct American Liberty League; Colby M. Chester, another ex-Liberty Leaguer, who is head of the General Foods Corp., and H. W. Prentis, Jr., president of the Armstrong Cork Co.

OLD stuff, you say. And in truth these are the stale shibboleths that hundreds of thousands of dollars sought vainly to foist on the American people bought in 1936. But the context is new, and this is all-important. In this desperate war for national survival the pro-

duction of war materials is decisive. And it is no small matter that today a small but powerful group of unreconstructed Liberty Leaguers, led by Lamont du Pont, chairman of the E. I. du Pont de Nemours & Co. (who was re-elected to the NAM board of directors), are centering their attack not merely on the social reforms of the New Deal, as was the case in the past, but on war production. This is what all the sound and fury about "socialistic controls" boils down to. And that it really is that was made clear on those rare occasions when the NAM chiefs actually got down to discussing some aspect of war production.

FOR EXAMPLE, there was the broadcast made during the convention by Walter D. Fuller, chairman of the NAM board. Fuller is president of the Curtis Publishing Co., whose magazine, the *Saturday Evening Post*, has helped spread appeasement, anti-Semitism, and other pro-fascist ideas. His broadcast was supposed to be a discussion of the subject of rationing war resources. But from beginning to end it was a complaint against the curtailment of civilian production. He particularly objected to the proposed industry concentration program of the War Production Board. Under this program, which has been put into effect with great success in Britain, the manufacture of essential civilian items like refrigerators or stoves is concentrated in two or three companies, while the rest are converted to war production. "If concentration of industry is necessary for victory," Fuller said, "you and I will certainly not oppose it. But we want to be certain that it is necessary." And of course he was raising this question out of solicitude for the small business firms which were in danger of being put out of business as a result of concentration. (The fact is that proper centralized planning of our war economy, which Fuller and his colleagues so bitterly oppose, is the only way to assure that small business will be kept going and its facilities utilized for war production.) Just to make clear what he had in mind Fuller cited this: "In the bicycle industry two nucleus plants were limited to a monthly output of 10,000 units. What was accomplished by this move? It accomplished the saving of less than 40,000 tons of steel a year—about as much steel as diligent scrap collectors could collect in an afternoon in any moderate-sized city."

"Only" 40,000 tons of steel! Why worry about it? Why interfere with business-as-usual merely to get enough steel (from one industry) to build eight battleships or more than 9,000 tanks? Listeners might have thought they had tuned in on Radio Berlin by mistake, but it was the chairman of the National Association of Manufacturers handing out the "line" of what we are asked to believe was the War Congress of American Industry.

European capitalists would smile at all this frantic talk about "socialism." Over there state capitalist measures even in peacetime are greater than those we have so far adopted in war. The fact is that our government, calling

into service almost exclusively men from the ranks of big business itself, has proceeded so gingerly that there has been no real organization of our war production program. Instead of organization and planning, we have had coaxing and exhortation—witness the efforts last year to persuade the auto industry to undertake conversion. And the War Production Board has acted as a polite umpire among conflicting interests rather than as a general staff planning strategy and issuing orders. The trouble is that American capitalists have led a rather sheltered existence and have grown up in ignorance of the essential facts of life. As a result, when their rugged individualistic activities get them into a jam, as was the case in 1932-33 and again in the outbreak of the present war, many of them get panicky when they have to take a little bitter medicine and begin to wring their hands over the imminent death of what they call "free enterprise" (as if just anybody is free to go into the aluminum or auto manufacturing business). A man like Earl Browder, whose brilliant book, *Victory—and After*, contains some of the most constructive proposals about war economy that have been made, has far more faith in the present stability of the capitalist system in America than the gentlemen in control of the NAM—if we are to take their words at face value.

THE latter is not at all certain. Take, for example, the aforementioned H. W. Prentis, Jr., chairman of the NAM executive committee. Prentis is the heavy thinker of the NAM. At last year's convention he delivered an oration in defense of the Bill of Rights and compared President Roosevelt to King George III. (Guess what King George's victims did!) This year he prepared an even more ambitious opus, entitled "The Way to Freedom," embellished with allusions to ancient Greece and Rome and studded with quotations from Plato, Oliver Cromwell, James Madison, de Tocqueville, Woodrow Wilson, Prof. A. G. B. Fisher, Stuart Chase, Peter Drucker, and Hanson W. Baldwin. About the only person Prentis didn't quote was H. W. Prentis, Jr. Let me refresh his memory. The *New York Times* of Nov. 30, 1938, carried the following news item:

"Philadelphia, November 29.—A warning that American businessmen might eventually be forced to turn to 'some form of disguised fascistic dictatorship' to bring order out of chaos was voiced here today by H. W. Prentis, Jr., president of the Armstrong Cork Co. of Lancaster."

Is eventually now? Do the NAM leaders object to the state capitalist measures of war economy or do they really object to the *democratic controls* of a war economy dedicated to the destruction of fascism? Perhaps Herbert Hoover, who received a thunderous ovation at the NAM gathering, gave the answer when in criticizing our government's methods and in setting forth his own twelve principles of war organization he said: "Civilian war organization is economic fascism itself."

A. B. MAGIL.

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

MORE STATEMENTS FROM PROMINENT AMERICANS ON ACHIEVEMENTS SINCE PEARL HARBOR AND THE BIG JOBS AHEAD.

Several weeks ago we asked Katherine Anne Porter, one of America's most distinguished short story writers, to give her views, for publication sometime in December, on the lessons of the past year in regard to Negro rights. Miss Porter, herself a Southerner, was so stirred by the dispute between Marian Anderson and the DAR that she decided to limit her comment to that issue. Though the controversy has since been settled, we think Miss Porter's words are still as pertinent and admirable as when she wrote them.—The Editors.

Katherine Anne Porter

Author of "Flowering Judas," etc.

AT THIS very moment (early November 1942) when the great news has come about our army in North Africa, and the same good news from Russia as always; when by listening to the radio we can hear the splendid words Freedom, Democracy, Our Way of Life, Justice for All, and Liberty, hundreds of times every day; when above the clamor of the war reports and the marching songs being plugged on the radio, earnest voices lecture us, bidding us hope, believe, fight, pray, work, and buy bonds; warning us that unless we change our ways for the better we are in effect fools and deserve what we shall get: I feel certain that quite millions of readers and listeners like myself paused for a baffled moment trying to figure out the second battle of the war between the DAR and Miss Marian Anderson.

I find this new civil war of the deepest interest and of most symbolic importance. I consider that Miss Anderson has been invaded again, and there are psychological elements in the attitude of the DAR toward Miss Anderson that remind me of that of Germany toward France. The Germans can't really

beat France permanently, but they cannot resist having another try from time to time. The important question to my mind is, why cannot those embattled Daughters let Miss Anderson alone? Why, after covering themselves and their country with shame in the first engagement of Constitution Hall, must they come back for more? Was it necessary for them to invite Miss Anderson to sing this particular benefit concert, or had it simply slipped their minds that she is a Negro, which caused all the row in the first place, and must never be allowed to sing in Constitution Hall, even if her voice is one of the world's musical wonders?

Couldn't the Daughters, whose chief claim to existence is that they are descended from men who fought to make this a free country, have simplified the whole thing by choosing a singer of their own triumphant race, for there are a good number of first rate ones, and let it go at that? What is the uncanny power exercised by Miss Anderson upon their imaginations? Could they not have thought up some new way this time to make themselves absurd on the front pages? They have hardly ever failed before; rarely do they repeat themselves. We have been able to depend upon a fresh outbreak of malodorous publicity from the Daughters of the American Revolution at least twice a year since who knows when. And always it was something original and comic in a rather sinister way, like a cartoon by Adams.

Are they slowing down, do you think? Is it a case of hardening of the arteries, or a stubborn case of arrested development, or both? It is easy to imagine them getting together and planning some lively little skit that will get their names in the papers once more, and after long brain cudgeling, one of them suggesting rather wearily, "Well, of course, we can always insult Marian Anderson.

That's good for any amount of publicity, and gives us the most wonderful chance to state again the great principles of this Republic which our Fathers" (every one genuflects here, creaking a little), "fought for."

So they invite Miss Anderson, a sensible, well mannered woman who happens also to be a superb artist, to sing in that all too celebrated Hall, where they had once forbidden her before, because she is a Negro. Miss Anderson hasn't changed her color or her ways since then, any more than the Daughters have changed theirs, and I am wondering in what dream world the Daughters live that they choose this moment of all moments in our history to make that *gaffe* again, with slight variations, but still, as you might say, twice in the same place. I hear just now that Miss Anderson has compromised with them: if the Daughters will allow a mixed audience, colored and white sitting where they please, she will not expect to sing there again, at least never on her own business rather than the Daughters'. Or it may be the other way about. At any rate, I am sorry if she has given way an inch, for such an opportunity as hers to teach a lesson in manners, morals, ethics, to say nothing of patriotism and plain political strategy, is much too good for her to throw over.

Would the Daughters ever learn, though? I am afraid not. But surely the rest of us are not going to be unteachable too. Isn't it time for some one, some one with real force who can make the words stick, to explain to the Daughters that a joke is a joke, of course, but that the gunning season on colored singers is closed for good. And further, that their *gamine* little habits of pulling chairs out from under Democracy, putting out their busy little feet and tripping up Human Decency, tying tin cans to the ghosts of the Founding Fathers, and playing hob generally in their larkish and



Katherine Anne Porter



Lt. Commdr. Charles S. Seely



Upton Sinclair