

MATTER OF FACT . . . by LEWIS MERRILL

WHAT ABOUT YOUR JOB?

[N THE midst of New York's tumultuous and joyous welcome, General "Ike" Eisenhower said some pretty sober things about peace and jobs. But the prospects for 60,000,000 jobs are not bright at the moment and that means the prospects for a lasting peace are not bright. Peace and jobs. Jobs and peace. They go together. You don't get one without the other.

Without underestimating the possible value of still discussing general economic policies to achieve the 60,000,000 jobs program, it is obvious that if the program is to have a chance, it is dependent on how we handle ourselves in the economic circumstances of today. Only by dealing with the living, concrete facts that are being produced in our current economic life will we be able to reach out to 60,000,000 jobs, to the Economic Bill of Rights. That's just to say that the future comes out of the present. And the present does not bode well.

It is now a generally accepted fact in governmental circles that by August 1945, there will be 5,000,000 unemployed in this country. Hundreds of thousands are becoming unemployed every week due to cutbacks on war contracts. In Detroit, several hundred thousand aircraft workers have been laid off. Out of the Norfolk-Portsmouth shipping center 100,000 residents have departed because of lay-offs. West Coast employment offices are screening 150,000 workers a month and in New York City it is estimated over 325,000 factory workers will be fired within three months. Even these facts, however, would not be too ominous if there were a planned effort to re-absorb the newly unemployed into industry. But there is no such plan. The only visible "plan" is the manifest intention of the major corporations to use the situation to drive down wage rates. If successful, this will seriously and drastically reduce the purchasing power of the mass of the people. Dr. George W. Taylor, chairman of the National War Labor Board, faithfully echoes this point of view. In a speech in Chicago he blandly asserts that unless wage rates are reduced, we are in danger of serious inflation. Meanwhile Theodore W. Kheel, executive secretary of the NWLB, in a speech to the Commerce and Industry Association of New York meticulously described the methods that the employers can use to reduce wages under existing NWLB regulations. And the employers are taking the advice of the NWLB. For example, in Buffalo workers fired from war plants, where they earned \$1.14 per hour, are being rehired at sixty-three cents an hour. In Detroit, the average wage in aircraft was \$1.20 per hour. As a result of downgrading incident to reducing the work force, these workers are now receiving eighty-nine cents an hour. In the New Jersey Federal Shipyards pay has been reduced from \$1.14 to \$1.00 per hour.

The initiation of a wage cutting drive concurrent with

the presence of 5,000,000 unemployed does not mean gradual reabsorption into industry. It means we have entered a period of permanent mass unemployment!

THE Full Employment Bill, pending before the Senate Banking and Currency Committee, could be helpful. But at best it would provide machinery to help insure full employment. There was plenty of machinery set up to deal with reconversion, but because there was no policy, the machinery is not producing results. The Full Employment Bill is not going to accomplish any miracles. And that fact might just as well be faced now when we can still do something about the problem.

In my opinion, the only way we can work toward the Economic Bill of Rights is to maintain the purchasing power of the workers. In April 1945—before the major cutbacks—a four percent drop in national income was recorded, most of it wage losses. National income statistics will likely show a continued decline between April and June 1945. Obviously, the increase in wage rates of at least twenty percent demanded by CIO President Philip Murray is absolutely essential in the national interest. Immediate passage of President Truman's proposals on unemployment insurance is also absolutely essential.

Neither the one nor the other is going to be secured without a real fight in every community in the land. If we lose on both these issues, we will lose all down the line.

The President of the United States sent an emergency message to the Congress on unemployment insurance weeks ago. But a bill has not even been prepared to embody his proposals into law. So there is no legislation on unemployment insurance even being considered by Congress, which early in July will recess until the fall. The failure of Congress to act means hungry days ahead for 5,000,000 workers. It means tougher days ahead for the farmers. It means critical times for the small businessmen and the middle class as a whole.

What about the twenty percent wage increase? It is merely a proposal. The fact is that the National War Labor Board is talking up the need for wage cuts. It is equally a fact that the workers, with and without official sanction, are going out on strike. And the Chicago Tribune crowd, hopefully working for a negotiated peace with Japan, is rubbing its hands with glee.

We voted for the Roosevelt program of a durable peace, full employment, the Economic Bill of Rights. These things can't just be voted into existence. They have to evolve out of what we do in maintaining purchasing power. I can't speak for labor. But as one leader of labor, I know we've got to make the fight of our life on these issues. If labor and its allies will fight, they will win. Wars are won by winning battles. The battle for unemployment insurance and a twenty percent wage increase are decisive in our war against poverty, against insecurity and against international conflicts. Since the election and especially since V-E Day, the progressive majority in the nation has retreated all down the line. The time has come to strike back with all the power we can muster if America is to be saved from turmoil and grim distress in the critical days ahead.

READERS' FORUM

Answering F. J. Meyers

TO NEW MASSES: F. J. Meyers, in his letter published in the June 26 issue of NM, says "those who are so sharply attacking the theoretical position of Earl Browder seem to have no fundamental difference with him on a concrete program of action for America." Here, Mr. Meyers, is the fundamental difference: The key to your mistake, and of all those who support Browder's revisionism, is your remark "the bourgeoisie is still the decisive class in America." Let us apply the touchstone of Marxism-Leninism to that statement.

We find, on page 110 of the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* the following: "We must not base our orientation on that strata of society which is no longer developing, even though they at present constitute the predominant force." Page 107 of the same book, "The dialectical method regards as important primarily not that which at the given moment seems to be durable and yet is already beginning to die away, but that which is arising and developing..." Marx taught us that it is the proletariat which is arising and developing within the heart of capitalism. Lenin taught us that imperialism is *moribund* capitalism.

Meyers goes on: "Everyone agrees that the complete destruction of German Nazism and Japanese fascist militarism has been and remains the essential primary guide of political policy." Here again he slides into revision. *Whose* political policy? The political policy of the American working class, or the political policy of the American imperialists?

The American imperialists fought Nazi Germany, and are fighting Japan, *not* to destroy fascism, but *only* to save their power and markets from their rival German and Japanese imperialists.

The American working class fought Germany, and is fighting Japan, because it is anti-fascist, because fascism (as Dimitroff showed) is the open, brutal dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic section of monopoly capital, which has as its program annexationist war and complete annihilation of all democrats, trade unions, Negroes and Jews.

Hence, only the working class can be a *consistent* fighter for democracy.

Hence, the revisionist opposition to organized labor being represented in the President's cabinet struck not only at the backbone of the war effort but also at the root of the battle to win the peace.

Hence, "progressive capitalists" like the Republican, Senator Ball, are already trying to sabotage the Teheran and Yalta perspectives by introducing bills to emasculate the Wagner Act. Should that kind of bill pass, the only class that is capable of leading an unyielding fight for Teheran and Yalta will be weakened.

True there is something new in the world. What is it? It is a definite possibility that Teheran, Yalta, San Francisco, Bretton Woods, 60,000,000 jobs, etc., can be achieved. The four main factors that created that possibility can also turn it into a certainty. What are they?

1. The defeat of Nazi Germany.
2. The entry of the American trade union movement, 14,000,000 strong, into the political arena. It is continuing to strengthen its ties with the other classes, even with those few individuals within the capitalist class who realize that the welfare of the nation is bound up with the welfare of labor. We all agree that socialism in our country today is *not* the issue, and that under the fighting leadership of the American working class, uniting itself with all segments of patriotic Americans, some wavering elements in the bourgeoisie *can* be successfully pushed onto the Teheran and Yalta path.
3. The emergence of the Soviet Union from the war as one of the strongest countries in the world.
4. The democratic forces in England and China, under the leadership of their respective working classes.

Only by steering our course by the compass of living Marxism-Leninism can we eventually accomplish the task that history assigns us. The American working class, and its vanguard, the American Communists, have today, in a very real sense, "a rendezvous with destiny."

New York City.

SARA S.

Errors of Overstress

TO NEW MASSES: In my previous letter [NEW MASSES, June 12], written before the appearance of the CPA Board Resolution of June 2, I attempted to harmonize to some extent the views of Browder with those of Foster and Duclos. This might have appeared quixotic, but now the resolution indicates a programmatic approach similar, with some extension and tightening up which would probably have occurred anyway, to that which the CPA was already

utilizing. No one can disagree with the prospectus of immediate action, as Ann Rochester points out, except that there is a self-contradiction in theorizing a sharp class conflict and working for "the broadest national coalition of all anti-fascist and democratic forces." So much for the program.

Now, if Marxism is a science, how can the two theories of class struggle be reconciled?

It is the position of the CPA Board that Marxism supports the theory of the permanent nature of finance capital, *i.e.*, in sharp conflict with the working class. Actually, the Marxian dialectic does not admit the permanency of any state of affairs in a dynamic world. That very small but growing kernel of "absolute" truth is that which we recognize as being true under the most extreme conditions and for the longest time in the practical conception of man. All other truths are "relative" truths, the validity of which depend on objective material mutations. The nature of capitalism, as considered today, is a relative, and not an absolute truth. That this is not mere transcendentalism may be demonstrated if we carry out the logic to a further degree. Consider that the whole world has become socialist excepting—say South America or the United States. Would the capitalist class then dream of violently opposing the workers there? No, of course not. It would be conciliatory almost to the point of abdication. In other words, it would have undergone a tremendous change in its nature.

Thus, it would not be a revision of Marxism to take a view that the nature of finance capital could change under certain circumstances.

I assume that Browder believes that, through the defeat of the major force of concentrated fascism and the establishment of labor-progressive governments from Asia west to the Atlantic, the balance of world forces has finally shifted in favor of the working classes. This is a very delicate balance. To utilize it for durable peaceful progress depends on the fulfillment of many preconditions. While there is some chance of this, we should try, he says. If it becomes obvious that the new relationship of world forces will not as yet *prove* decisive in changing the nature of monopoly capital—then we must gird ourselves for the coming struggle for power.

What Browder did was to point out the existence of certain possibilities. His approach was definitely Marxian. The margin of error, if there is one, may be found only in over-stressing these possibilities. Time will determine whether the present reactionary trend is a temporary aberration or will deepen.

Therefore, with some meeting of the minds on these questions, I see no reason why the CPA must admit a great theoretical error or isolate its foremost spokesman. Further, we should fully acknowledge the role of Foster and Duclos in making us more alert to the odds against the progressive forces.