

THE BALL-HATCH-BURTON BOMB

By THE EDITORS

SENATORS BALL, Burton and Hatch tossed a sputtering bomb into the American scene last week, which, if permitted to explode, will do more damage than any measure of domestic legislation in generations. Their "labor relations" bill, verbally devoted to "industrial harmony," "fair play," and other euphonious pretensions, is a litical and industrial dynamite of the highest power—and the sooner our entire people is aware of this, the better for our country.

Estimate of the bill's real intent can be measured by the unanimity of labor disapproval—every major trade union organization has spoken out vigorously in opposition. Only traditional anti-labor spokesmen have welcomed the measure.

Twenty-four hours after the proposed legislation hit the front pages—it evidently required that much time to go through the voluminous legalistic twists of the bill—this much was clear: first, the bill would in effect nullify all the advances made by labor during Roosevelt's presidency, would render the Wagner act meaningless; second, it would even rip to pieces forward-looking legislation of the pre-FDR days, like the Norris-La Guardia anti-injunction act; third, it would be a boon to all who have sought the return of the open shop; fourth, it would restrain workingmen in the vise of compulsory arbitration and propel them into a maze of endless litigation; fifth, it would foment government intervention into the life of trade unions on the pretext of "safeguarding democracy," thereby implying that all labor bodies are racket-controlled; and finally, it would divert labor's attention from the life-and-death problems of reconversion, oblige it to battle for its very existence as an effective, organized entity. The bill would act to touch off industrial strife; labor, faced with unemployment and a rapidly falling income (the Department of Commerce revealed that for the month of April incomes dropped four percent compared to March, the sharpest drop for one month in six years), is obliged to consider all measures to safeguard its actual living standards. The Ball-Burton-Hatch legislation would deprive them of traditional safeguards and methods explicit and implicit in the Wagner Act and instead of promoting industrial peace, would invite strife.

A word about its sponsors. Donald Richberg, it is common knowledge, had a major part in drafting the measure. Mr. Richberg—whatever his past, and that is none too inspiring—is today a leading corporation lawyer, one of Standard Oil's biggest legalistic guns. His name is associated with the Railway Labor Act of 1926, which pretty effectively transformed one of the strongest union setups in the country into a handshackled giant, so that today the railroadman is one of the poorest paid industrial workers in the land. Mr. Richberg's pretensions as a friend of

labor were blasted when, as general counsel for NRA in the early Roosevelt days, he interpreted section 7A of the National Industrial Recovery Act as an open shop guarantee, and at one time definitely implied that strikes were illegal.

Operating on the false tenet that labor and capital are entities of equal strength, and that employers have been getting a raw deal, he would completely subvert the principle that underlies the Wagner act—i.e., that the employer possesses inherent advantages over the workingman and that therefore the latter's interests must be protected by the state. Mr. Richberg—and the sponsoring Senators—are acting in the interests of all employers and enemies of labor who have thundered his viewpoint throughout the years of the Roosevelt administration in their effort, at first, to stop the Wagner legislation, and afterward, to sabotage and to destroy it completely. The propaganda, if accepted, that the power of labor and management require "equalization," would restore the imperious, swashbuckling days the National Association of Manufacturers yearns for, and labor's welfare would be set back generations.

NEW MASSES wishes to emphasize that this is a matter of life-and-death significance to our democracy. If organized labor—the most progressive stratum of our democratic structure—were to be weakened, crippled, the entire edifice stands in danger of toppling. This is a matter of equal concern to professional and middle-class people, as well as to the workingman and to the country.

Finally, a word about the senatorial sponsors. Because they enjoy a liberal reputation as the B2H2 political compound, they are in a position to do more damage than if a group of unreconstructed reactionaries were the sponsors. We do not, at this writing, know the rock-bottom inspiration of this bill, but it impels, inevitably, the speculation that central groups of the employing class are responsible. It is class legislation, and it has as its objective purpose—regardless of the fine words and idealistic sentiments of its sponsors—the reversal of labor's gains in the past dozen years, and more. Does it mean that the employers secretly embarked on a devious, but reckless course to smash organized labor, to head into a labor-baiting, labor-hating crusade that characterized the end of the last war? Workers, and their friends, are asking that question. It is, indeed, a fateful question, as the gigantic problems of reconversion, of full employment, are on us. For these reasons, labor must meet the threat *unitedly*, settle its past differences in face of the common peril. We urge our readers, and all those they influence, to make known their objection to the bill, make it known so significantly, that Congress will be obliged to reject this sinister legislation. Any other course means calamity to our democracy.

WHAT BRITAIN'S VOTER WANTS

By R. PALME DUTT

London (by wireless).

THE present general election in Britain is the first major test of political currents in the democratic world following victory over fascism. Its outcome will have a very important bearing not only on the future of Britain but on the future of world politics and the part Britain will play in the post-war world. It is universally recognized that the foundation of postwar peace and security and of the democratic partnership of nations is the close co-operation and understanding of Britain, the Soviet Union and the United States. This foundation is not in principle questioned in the present election. It is accepted in the program of every party.

Nevertheless, it is not true that foreign policy plays no part in this election. Since the closing stages of the war, and since the formation of the caretaker's government, there have been revealed certain disquieting tendencies of British policy which have caused alarm among all democrats.

Churchill's broadcast of May 13 first strongly emphasized these tendencies, which were further brought to the fore by the behavior of Anthony Eden at San Francisco, the attitude toward Tito, the actions in northern Italy, the Flensburg and similar episodes in relation to Germany. These tendencies were also exemplified by the encouragement and subsidizing of the most outrageous Polish pro-fascist and anti-Soviet incitement, the organized whispering campaign against the USSR, as well as the provocative inclusion of the principal anti-Crimea champions in key junior positions in the Foreign and War offices. All these tendencies have been to some extent deliberately overemphasized as part of the game of balance of power politics, as conceived by British diplomacy without being intended as a basic change of policy. But they have inevitably thrown an ugly question mark over the whole future of British policy in the eyes of world opinion. Will those forces of Tory reaction which have in the past shown such friendship for fascism and hostility toward the Soviet Union and democracy, and which are now so strongly reasserting themselves, succeed in strengthening their position in this election and thus win a free hand to

undermine the basis of the democratic alliance at some future point? Or will the progressive, democratic forces of the British people succeed in taking over the leadership and in forming a new government in Britain which will be a true partner of the democratic and progressive nations of the world? This is one main issue of the election, although not directly proclaimed in the party programs or the most prominent in the minds of the electors.

THE main issue, which is the principal issue of the election in the minds of the electors, is the question of reconstruction in Britain. Britain was faced with critical problems of decline before the war. In the new world situation, at the close of the war, they have become a hundred times more critical. Every observer recognizes the necessity of a basic, technical reconstruction. Coal, iron and steel, transport, textiles—all reveal the same picture of obsolete equipment and disorganization combined with tight monopoly and crippling capital charges and dead-weight costs thereby preventing reorganization. Hence the demand for nationalization is no socialist issue but a plain necessity of postwar reconstruction and even economic survival.

Similarly, the effects of landlordism

is crippling necessary housing schemes and town planning. The housing crisis, already bad even before the war, is now very serious. The question is will the old reactionary rentier and monopoly forces concentrated in the Tory Party succeed in maintaining the stranglehold and prevent reorganization? Will they seek as before to find the solution in policies of restriction and of intensified exploitation of the colonial empire? These policies are ever more grimly clung to in the midst of a world which is less and less prepared to tolerate the continuance of the colonial system. Or will the progressive forces prove strong enough to take over the leadership in order to carry through the necessary immediate measures of social and economic policy at home, a progressive international economic policy, and a new relationship with India and the colonial peoples? This is the second main issue of the election.

Toryism is fighting for its life in this election. The Tories are out to repeat the tactics of 1918. It will be remembered a snap election was called immediately after the Armistice to cash in quickly on the victory and on the reputation of Lloyd George as a war leader. On this basis there were returned to Parliament all of the hardfaced men who looked, as Lord Keynes described it, as if they had done well out of the war. Since then Toryism has continuously held power in Britain, with the exception of the two and a half years of the two minority Labor governments.

Once again the Tories are trying to work a snap election. The sudden decision to call the election, reached within a fortnight of V-E Day, in the face of the protests of all the opposition parties, means that very large numbers of voters, especially working class voters and servicemen, estimated by some newspapers as high as 4,000,000, will be disenfranchised owing to the imperfect condition of the register and to wartime difficulties in respect of their address and place of voting.

The Tories hope once again to cash in on victory and on the reputation of Churchill as the war leader. But 1945 is not 1918. The people have been through experiences between the wars

War Babies



"I said 'Heavy barrage against tonight, Alfie.'"