

NM SPOTLIGHT

Strikes and the WLB

PUBLIC members of the War Labor Board have once again demonstrated their lack of statesmanship in handling the problems involved in labor's wage demands. Their recommendation to the President against revision of the Little Steel formula is not only shortsighted and unjust, but it plays into the hands of men who seek to undermine the war effort through deliberate violation of labor's no-strike pledge. The public members' report, which is supported by the industry members, will be used to cover up the real motives behind the action of the executive board of the Textile Workers Union (TWU) in rescinding the no-strike pledge to the nation for 100,000 cotton workers.

This act is no innocent protest against the deplorable procrastinations and the uneven functioning of the WLB. It is a direct attack on our war effort on the eve of the battles for decision on the Western Front. The textile workers have just grievances. The wage raise they, together with the packinghouse workers, received on the day their leaders repudiated the no-strike pledge is inadequate. Workers in many other industries have similar grievances. Even though some of these grievances are being partially satisfied, as in the case of the steel workers, there is much justified discontent with the WLB. It is relatively easy for unscrupulous men to borrow a leaf from John L. Lewis and translate this discontent into strike action. Minor officials have from time to time pulled wildcat strikes. But now a national CIO union, under the leadership of a former member of the WLB, President Emil Rieve, has in violation of the decisions of the last CIO convention given official sanction to its local unions to take matters into their own hands irrespective of the effect on the war.

The kind of leadership represented by Rieve, Lewis, Samuel Wolchok of the United Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Employees, and Walter Reuther of the United Auto Workers is basically anti-CIO and anti-United States. This gambling with strikes is a knife in the back not only of our boys who are sacrificing everything on the Western Front and in the Pacific, but of labor itself. Large numbers of workers

are having their patience tried and the latest action of the majority of the War Labor Board has only served to inflame them further. But strikes can only make the task of winning improvements all the more difficult. The question is whether the CIO is to follow Philip Murray or John L. Lewis. To follow Philip Murray means to repudiate in unambiguous terms the sabotage of the Rieves and Reuthers.

The WLB is an important instrument of the war effort, but it is being seriously undermined by the vacillation and shortsightedness of its public members. The revision of the Little Steel formula should not be regarded as a special labor interest. What is, in fact, involved is the *national interest*. And the report of the WLB public members proves it negatively by arguing from premises that are *contrary* to the national interest. The report claims that no upward revision of the Little Steel formula is necessary because "adjusted straight-time hourly earnings" have increased 36.7 percent since January 1941, while the cost of living has risen only 29.5 percent. This cost of living figure is an "improved" version of the discredited figure of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, which is some four or five percent lower. The AFL and CIO place the increase at about forty-three percent, which most Americans would find more in accord with their own experience.

But even accepting the WLB majority's figure, it is pointed out by the AFL and CIO members that the board majority has devised a new basis for calculating the rise in hourly earnings. Scheduled occupational wage rates have gone up only 19.5 percent since January 1941. In order to arrive at the higher figure, the public members have included such temporary wartime factors as incentive payments, increased night shift premiums, merit increases and promotions. In other words, they propose to penalize workers who boost production above the norm or do superior work by denying them the possibility of raising their basic wage rates. Thus, while the War Production Board is encouraging incentive payments and merit increases, the majority of the War

Labor Board is publicly discouraging them!

It is a pity that President Roosevelt, whose burdens are already heavy enough, is being so poorly served by the WLB majority. We hope, nevertheless, he overrules their myopic findings and deprives the Lewis', Rieves and Reuthers of a major weapon against the war effort.

The People Win

BARRING some unforeseen setback, not anticipated as we go to press, the Ives-Quinn bill establishing a permanent FEPC in New York State should have passed both the Senate and Assembly by the time this issue appears. The big battle occurred on February 20 at the public hearing before a legislative committee. What had originally been planned as a device to defeat the measure was turned into a notable victory for the vast majority in the state who favor the bill. The whole lengthy strategy of the opposition, in fact, boomeranged. In last year's session Governor Dewey blocked the measure by calling for another and completely unnecessary investigation into discriminatory practices, a move which contributed to his defeat in the fall elections. A new measure was thereupon introduced at the opening of the state legislature's present session. Such reactionaries as Senators Bontecou and Coudert spoke sharply against it, claiming the support of businessmen throughout the state. The governor said nothing until public opinion had expressed itself so overwhelmingly for the bill that he had no choice but to jump lamely on the bandwagon.

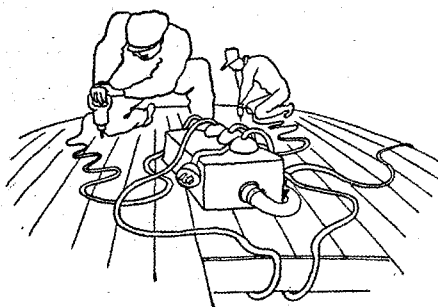
The public hearings were sensational in their manifestation of the wholehearted support of nearly every sector of the state community for the principles of nondiscrimination. Coudert's claims regarding business opposition to the measure were proved false. While a number of trade body representatives spoke against the bill, in many instances where it was possible to check the opinion of the membership whom they purported to represent, their performance was proved to be a fraud. The result was that a large number of legislative fence-sitters, unable to keep their precarious balance against the tremendous barrage of public opinion, joined the victorious majority.

Labor and church organizations, legal bodies and representatives of minority groups all deserve credit for this triumph over bigotry and reaction. New York State is setting a precedent which may well be copied by other states and by the federal Congress.

Communists in the Army

WHATEVER its original prejudices about Communists and Communist sympathizers, the War Department has learned in the last three years that they are among the best troops in the Army's ranks and that to restrict the use of their services is to deprive the Army of excellent talent. There is an imposing list of Communists who have died in battle on every American front. They fought hard and loyally because their political understanding taught them the nature of the enemy. They were exemplary soldiers because their convictions deepened their love of country. Among them have been Capt. Alexander Suer, who won the Distinguished Service Cross and Oak Leaf Cluster before he succumbed to wounds received in Belgium. There are others: Hank Forbes, Harold Spring, Seymour Keidan, Meyer Laderman—all dead now. And among those who survived is Staff Sgt. Robert Thompson, holder of the Distinguished Service Cross, and since his release from the Army a vice president of the Communist Political Association.

It would seem that in honor to them it would not be necessary to defend them. Their deeds are their best defense. But the *Chicago Tribune* and Representatives May and Rankin are on the war-path against the Army for issuing an order countermanding previous instructions barring Communists from commissions and certain duties. Of course, the opposition to the new Army ruling would come from such "democrats" as Rankin, the anti-Semite; May, the Negro-baiter; and Colonel McCormick, the fomenter of treason. A good many people will recognize this as a blatant attempt to keep the Army from running its own affairs, just as they will see in the Army's official change of attitude a maturity worthy of the millions of anti-fascists who form its personnel. Lincoln had no hesitation to commission Communists in the Union forces. Nor did General Eisenhower hesitate to send a telegram of appreciation recently to the Guilford Branch of the Communist Party of London thanking its members for their pledge of support. Rankin and May and McCormick may not like it, but that's how the world is these days.



Konzal

New Currents

THERE is a fresh breeze whipping the ivy on the walls of some of America's oldest institutions of learning. The surge of people's movements has eddied into the corners of our cultural centers bringing new values and new appraisals of old ideals. At times the impact is sharp, as when the editorial of a twenty-two-year-old student defending social equality for Negroes brought a whirlwind into the sleepy southern town of Williamsburg, Virginia, and the students stood up bravely for their right to say what they believed, to fight for a more democratic world. At other points the victories are quiet, strong steps forward. Such a step was the appointment of Mrs. Adelaide Cromwell Hill as instructor in sociology at Smith College. Mrs. Hill will be the first Negro to serve on the faculty of Smith. She is an alumna of the college, graduated with honors in 1940. She took her Masters at the University of Pennsylvania and is studying for her doctorate at Harvard University. She had taught at Hunter College in New York. There need to be many more such appointments until the last vestige of feeling that education belongs to an aristocracy is supplanted by one that proudly acclaims its democracy.

The Chaplin Smear

EVERYONE who read Charlie Chaplin's statement in reply to Senator Langer's demand that he be deported must have felt a deep sense of shame at this renewed attempt at character assassination. The Langer onslaught is the climax to one of the most degraded newspaper campaigns in many decades. It has known no bounds and as Chaplin charges "it has been going on for four years, ever since I made an anti-Nazi picture, *The Great Dictator*." The persecution reached even greater fury, he states, "after I dared speak on behalf of Russia urging the Allies to open a second front. For this I was bitterly attacked by reactionary columnists using every device to discredit me with the public."

The inspiration for the recent lurid trials in a California courtroom he attributes directly to pro-Nazis and reactionaries who are eager to see him banished "from the country for which my two sons are fighting overseas." That this final effort to smear Chaplin comes from one of the most notorious pro-fascist figures in the Senate is merely proof that not all the wreckers of a liberal culture are in Berlin.

Arabian Days

FOR many Americans whose sole knowledge of the Arab world comes either from a reading of the Lawrence saga or the *Arabian Nights*, the meeting between Mr. Roosevelt and the rulers of Egypt, Ethiopia and Saudi Arabia has a luster and glamor worthy of the most picturesque Hollywood imagination. Emperor Haile Selassie's people are by and large Christians, but King Farouk and Ibn Saud are at the center of Arab-Moslem civilization with its 275,000,000 people stretching from Africa into Asia. This civilization is a complex of religions and pastoral economies that frequently baffles the western mind, and it is also an area of the globe where unsettled controversies will have their effects on the peace. Until the landings in North Africa American policy in those regions was almost non-existent, but it has developed rather rapidly under the stress of war. It is clear that the President's discussions in the Suez will lead to greater participation of our government in the affairs of the Near and Middle East. For one, the question of our future oil reserves is involved, and for another, the Near East is a pivot in inter-continental communications both by sea and air.

Naturally the British are fearful of American intentions in an area where London controls most of the tremendous Near Eastern oil supplies. The British view us as competitors and the issues around these fears may explode unless they are settled equitably by agreement. There is also the quarrel between France and Lebanon and Syria. Both these latter states demand the end of the French mandate and complete control over military forces within their borders. They naturally have the sympathy of other Arab countries whose aspirations for unity and independence were again voiced in the conference on Arab federation which began February 14 in Cairo. There is also the Palestinian question, on which little or no progress has been made. And moving hand in hand with all these political issues is the economic future of these terribly backward

agrarian countries. The United States has tremendous prestige in the Middle East and its influence can be a highly positive one in building a stability and prosperity which will keep these countries from falling prey to aggressors.

In Peace or War

“THE creation of such an army in the very jaws of the appalling initial defeats will always remain one of the most amazing achievements in history . . . the [Soviet] system itself showed startling powers of evoking, mobilizing and directing the human and material reserves available.” The recent New York *Herald Tribune* editorial from which these quotations are drawn also spoke of “the most up-to-date equipment” and “the invincible morale of the Red Army” and remarked that “the Communist system . . . probably is better for waging war [than our own].”

These praises were elicited by the celebration of Red Army Day and the remarkable series of articles of the *Herald Tribune's* correspondent, Maurice Hindus, who has just returned from the Soviet Union. But this tribute to our Soviet ally ends on a note of doubt—the question: Will the Soviet Union meet the test of peace as successfully as it has met the test of war?

Do the *Tribune* editors recall that on the eve of the war commentators were claiming that the Soviet economic successes of the brief and precarious interval of peace would not survive the first blows of war? It was these very achievements in the all-too-short and difficult period of peace that made possible the Soviet war achievements. It is a safe prediction that the other democratic peoples of the world will find the powerful peacetime economy of the Soviet democracy as necessary and decisive a bulwark as its Red Army and its efficient organization for war has proved to be.

Water for Two Lands

THE Senate Foreign Relations Committee has for some weeks been conducting hearings on a treaty with Mexico, signed over a year ago, concerning the waters of the Rio Grande, the Colorado and Tijuana Rivers. After long and harassing delay, the hearings have at last been ended. The treaty itself is highly technical, having been drawn up by engineers to provide for the damming, storing and equitable allocation of the vast waters of these three rivers between the United States and Mexico. And because of the agreement's technicalities the country is not sufficiently aware of the great political

importance of immediate ratification by the Senate.

Senate consideration of this treaty coincides with the Inter-American Conference on Problems of War and Peace, where the firmness of our intentions to extend the Good Neighbor policy into the postwar period is being put to the test.

It is obvious that a defeat of the treaty would deal a serious blow to hemisphere relations. Opposition to it comes from two quarters. California opinion seems to take the view that no water which might in some conceivable manner eventually find its way to that state's valleys should be retained or allocated to any one else, even to Mexico, through which sections of all three of these rivers run. Fortunately opinion in Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, Utah and Wyoming in general favors ratification. There would be no danger of defeat if California were the only source of opposition. But as usual we have to deal with a second source, those Republicans who snipe at any and all measures which have administration sponsorship. There is a possibility that their votes, combined with those from California, can obstruct its ratification. For this reason national opinion must speak out promptly to avoid serious damage to the policy of good neighborliness.



FRONT LINES

by COLONEL T.

ASSAULT ON THE RHINE

FEBRUARY 22 and 23, 1945, will go down in history as perhaps the most significant and decisive double date of this war. For the time between the birthday of the leader of America's Army and the birthday of the USSR's Army was precisely the fateful night when American regiments were moving up to the front line facing the Cologne Plain and American artillery was making the last preparations for laying down the mighty barrage which ushered in the big push.

Four hundred miles to the east Soviet regiments were completing the liquidation of the German garrison of 50,000 men in the great Polish fortress of Posnan, thus opening the way for a renewed assault on the Berlin fortified area.

And so it came to pass that Feb. 23,

1945, became a date of which it will be said: “that was *before* Feb. 23, 1945” or “that was *after* Feb. 23, 1945”—the date when the first truly coordinated assault on Germany by the Eastern and Western Allies began.

AS THIS is written (February 26) the fortresses of Juelich and Dueren have fallen to the Ninth and First American Armies who are now advancing on Cologne. To the north the Canadians and British are near Calcar, compressing the right flank of the enemy fighting space west of the Rhine. To the south the American Third Army is drilling down the valley of the Moselle and is near the fortress of Trier, compressing the left flank of the enemy fighting space and possibly aiming at

cutting off the Emmerich-Coblenz-Trier triangle of that space from the fortified area between the Saar and the Rhine—the incision to be made along the Trier-Coblenz line. Meanwhile the American Seventh Army is exerting what looks like holding pressure precisely on that fortified area, preventing the enemy from shifting troops from here to the north.

All this is the push to the Rhine which will be the first really big water barrier yet encountered by American troops. The Seine, Somme, Marne, Moselle, and of course the Pruem, Roer, Our, Saar, etc., are not much as rivers go. The Loire and Rhone were not really defended by the enemy. Thus the only real water barriers forced by Allied troops were the Maas and Waal in Holland which the