

Situation of the American Workers

American Fraction of the Left Communist International
1947/1948

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American Imperialism is seeking to perpetuate world capitalism. It is implementing the Truman doctrine and the Marshall plan for that purpose. We cannot help but recall the Dawes Plan after World War I, initiated by the U.S., and the result [sic] defeat of the proletarian revolution in Europe following upon the workers victory in Russia of October, 1917. Then, the U.S. imperialists came into conflict with revolutionary soviets. Today, the conflict is between Imperialist America and Imperialist Russia, foreshadowing World War III.

The Truman doctrine and Marshall plan disguise their anti-working class character under the cloak of freedom of small nations under democracy. Democracy and freedom, of course, is any state that, regardless of its form of rule, becomes a buffer for U.S. against the Imperialist expansion of Russia.

The present foreign policy of American imperialism cannot be understood unless the workers understand that the domestic policies of American capitalism are part and parcel of the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan. The national significance of these plans are lost sight of in the glare of international imperialist power politics. It is important to establish the fact that along with its plans for Imperialist domination abroad, U.S. capitalism has its domestic plans for lowering the standard of living of the American workers by weakening and paralyzing their struggle for existence.

What is the connection between this anti-working class drive at home and American Imperialist policy abroad?

The basic contradictions of capitalism are decisive in driving U.S. Imperialism to organize the world for the benefit of its own ruling class. To be successful it must weaken the workers' position in capitalist society at home. The contradiction between socialized production and capitalist appropriation is the root of the class struggle in U.S. The U.S. capitalists are trying a variation on their old strategy to destroy the workers' weapons of economic and political defense. This is the basic class drive of the capitalists to abolish the class struggle for the benefit of their dictatorship, masked by bourgeois democratic forms.

The American worker faces the problem of providing food, shelter and clothing, in a sharply rising tide of price and profit. Prices on food are up 29%. Clothing has risen 17.5%. All other items up 17.5%. Wages and salaries have gone down from 70.2% to 62.4% of national income in 4th quarter of 1946. Corporate profits after taxes of the Iron and Steel Industry is almost 500%, Machinery 275%, Automotive

399%, Non-Ferrous Metals and products 175%, Food, Beverages, Tobacco over 400%, Oil producing and refining over 350%, Industrial Chemicals over 350%, The average weekly take-home pay of the workers in 1947 averages \$48.86. His weekly buying power averages \$30.16 (From "Economic Outlook", C.I.O.). The value of sales rose sharply in 1947 with a fluctuation downward recorded in April, 1947; but the total volume of goods has sharply declined. Obviously, higher prices as an inducement for capitalism to expand has not resulted in increased production of goods, but has created artificial restraints on production in order to keep price and profit up. The admonition to the workers by the capitalist spokesman that; the workers must work harder; work longer hours in order to keep up volume production of goods is so much fakery.

Charles Van Devander in his column Washington Memo in Hew York Post of Friday September 5th, 1947 reports of meetings between leaders of basic industry and moulders of government policy. At these meetings, it is reported a leading spokesman for the steel industry admitted the recent coal wage and price boost could have been absorbed without raising steel prices. He also admitted that steel could make ample profits and expand besides at 90% of present capacity. But, he said, steel had to prepare for the "bust" ahead. Similar statements were made by a leading capitalist of the auto industry. These are the straws in the wind. American Capitalism is "planning" for a certain depression. Lay-offs of workers are another indication of the coming crisis. As of March to May 1947, 251,000 were unemployed in manufacturing; Textile and apparel, 143,000; electrical goods 60,000; Rubber products, 16,000; a total of 394,000 idle. Of course, to bourgeois cynics, if unemployment is under 2,000,000, the workers are prosperous. On Sept. 5th, 1947 the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported for June 1947 net spendable weekly earnings of single workers without dependents averaged \$41.09 or \$26.50 in terms of 1939. The worker with 3 dependents, spendable earnings averaged \$47.37, or \$29.97 in terms of 1939. Evidently the workers are not prosperous.

Housing under capitalism was always wretched, but now is even more critical. Just as artificial scarcities of commodities under capitalism are utilized to jack up prices and profits, so the picture is repeated in the field of real estate. The recent rent law passed by congress to increase rents has been echoed by a host of local rent increase laws all over the nation. The workers are now faced with the problem of increased rents or evictions. Increased friction between landlord and worker to the point of shooting is reported nationally.

The American worker is getting the short end of the stick in every phase of his life from the cradle to the grave. The Taft-Hartley slave labor act was designed to outlaw any expression of resentment by the workers thru strikes, boycotts or political action.

In face of this ruthless drive by the capitalists and their government in Washington to paralyze the workers struggle for existence what is the picture regarding the democratic rights of workers?

The American Civil Liberties Union in an 89 page report entitled "In Times of Challenge," states "apparently justified scepticism as to the immediate future of our democratic liberties as instruments of progress." The report observes a "general retreat to nationalism, militarism and defense of status-quo, with liberal and minority forces everywhere on the defensive." The report was corroborated by a poll of 125 correspondents in all 48 states showing a "trend to greater restrictions on dissenters and minorities, particularly on any movement associated with the Communists." In its report the Union included among unfavorable developments 4 lynchings, the

acquittal in South Carolina of 28 “confessed lynchers,” the enactment of the Taft-Hartley law and a U.S. Supreme Court decision approving use of public funds to transport pupils to Catholic parochial schools. Also a decision to extending the legality of search without warrant; the Presidents order for “dangerously vague tests” of the loyalty of federal employees and the “continued witch hunting crusade” of the House Committee on Un-American Activities.

Sporadic strikes in industry are increasing despite the political and economic pressure against the American workers. This is the real answer at present to the plutocrats of Wall Street and their stooges of both parties, Democrats and Republicans in Washington. This is the guerilla activity resulting from the failure of the C.I.O., A.F.L. and R.R. Brotherhood leaders to call a general strike in protest against the continuing anti-working class campaign of U.S. capitalism. The class struggle picture is one of retreat and kow-towing to capitalism by the workers leadership.

The labor day messages of both C.I.O. and A.F.L. leaders was in essence acceptance of the Taft-Hartley Slave Act. Wasting the dues of the A.F.L. and C.I.O. workers in court actions while discouraging action thru the workers main weapon at present, the strike, is the collaborationist policy of the trade union leadership. Soft assurances to management of their cooperation with the boss class is the C.I.O. A.F.L., and R.R. Brotherhood answer to the Taft-Hartley slave act. Workers cannot expect any solution to their problems from the traitors at the head of their so-called unions.

Most insidious of all are the voices of the pseudo-lefts from the Communists (Stalinists) to the Trotskyites who in one voice advocate a labor party or a third party (if the democratic party cannot be reformed [Wallace]). The Stalinists have travelled from a program of “Socialism in one country” to a program for capitalism in all countries. The Trotskyites have travelled from “Permanent Revolution” to “Permanent Reform.” Labor Parties and or Populist third Parties will repeat with mathematical exactness the record of defeat and demoralization inflicted upon the downtrodden of Europe by the labor Parties of the 2nd International, such as the British labor Party with its record of colonial oppression in the middle east and the orient, and reduction of its own working class at home to a coolie standard of living.

The pseudo-left has nothing to offer the workers of America either. They are nothing but safety-valves to shoot off steam enabling the boss class to continue its dictatorship over the workers.

What is the course that has the best guarantee of smashing the oppressive rule of capitalism?

The most pressing need is for militants in the workers mass organizations to form fighting fractions against the labor-management line of their leadership; for a general strike against the Taft-Hartley slave act, for a 6 hour day 30 hour week, for \$60 a week. We know that no matter what is achieved thru immediate demands, wages and prices and profits cannot be adjusted to one another under capitalism. The need for a workers state as the prelude to Socialism must be told to the class by our class-conscious militants, openly and without any weasel words. They must learn the need for a party that is not corrupted by patriotism for capitalist Russia or capitalist America, a party of revolutionary Marxism.

The road to this party is not a simple one.

The essential task is to turn the present retreat from the onslaught of the capitalists and their government into its opposite. An offensive all along the line against

capitalism, its wars and recurring depression.

Labor is the "law". Labor is society. Without labor there is neither law nor society. Labor produces our food, fuel, shelter and clothing. Labor produces our economic and cultural values. Without labor there is no life. Labor is the dynamic giant. It is greater than the atomic bomb, for without labor there is no bomb. Therefore the workers, the living labor power has the potential to turn defeat today into victory to-morrow.

We must gird our loins for the continuing class struggle and take measures to increase the fighting power of workers to-day and tomorrow in the crisis of war and depression. This can be done by forging a revolutionary marxist party of the workers in the U.S.

In this period such a party would strengthen and guide the fighting fractions in the unions and mass organizations, uniting tenants and consumers groups with the workers at the point of production. The party would arouse the farmworkers to the need for unity with the city workers on a program of revolutionary Socialism.

This is the road upon which the American workers can free themselves from the four fears; unemployment, war, depression and Fascism.