

How We Must Fight against the Demagogy of Fascists and Social-Fascists

By EARL BROWDER

DEMAGOGY, on an unprecedented scale, is today the principal weapon of the capitalist class to hold back the rising wave of discontent of the million masses of workers, just as police clubs and gas-bombs are the principal weapons against the vanguard of the workers who already are mobilized on the streets for struggle. Demagogy and police-clubs are twin weapons, used interchangeably and simultaneously, to demoralize and break down the demands of the workers for relief from the terrible burdens of the crisis. The working class, and its vanguard the Communist Party, have made less progress in fighting demagogy than in fighting the police terror. Therefore this question must be the object of our special study. Where are our greatest weaknesses in fighting the demagogy of the capitalist class and its agents?

SOCIAL-FASCIST DEMAGOGY MOST DANGEROUS

The demagogy of Republican and Democratic politicians, while the main enemy in this field in point of volume and material backing (press, organization, etc.), is not the most difficult to expose and overcome politically among the more advanced workers. Hoover's demagogy, for example, about "no wage cuts," has already exposed itself so effectively that it is the butt of rude jokes even by the capitalist press. But it is the demagogy of the social-fascists, the Socialist Party and its groups and grouplets, some elements in the American Federation of Labor, and the groups of renegades from the Communist movement (Trotskyites and Lovestoneites), which is politically most dangerous because it is most deceptively masked, most liable to mislead and confuse the vanguard itself. Therefore it is the social-fascists (especially the "left" variety) which constitute the main enemy in the struggle against demagogy.

The crisis of capitalism forces the masses to look for a solution, for some way out of the crisis. It is clear that a new path must be found. In the search for the path, the workers are forced to choose between that leading to fascism, the path of restoration of capitalism at the expense of the workers, and on the other hand the path

leading to proletarian revolution, the overthrow of capitalism by the working class and the establishment of a new order of society. It is the role of the social-fascists to lead the revolting workers onto the path of fascism under the illusion that they are travelling toward socialism. This is the greatest danger to the development of the revolutionary movement in the U.S.A. That is why we must concentrate upon the exposure of the social-fascists, and the burning out of all traces of their influence within the ranks of the Communist Party.

HOOVER'S STAGGER SYSTEM AND THE SOCIAL-FASCISTS

For purposes of brevity and concreteness, we will here examine this problem only in a few specific examples.

The capitalist solution of the crisis demands that the burdens be placed upon the workers. The ten million unemployed must be sternly denied unemployment insurance, must be denied any cash relief from government treasuries, must be given the very minimum of "food relief" in the most degrading forms of charity, and must be forced to work for a miserable wage, just sufficient to keep them alive, accustoming them, by millions, to a standard of life lower than that of pre-crisis times by 50 to 70 per cent. The entire "wages bill" of the capitalist class is to be cut in half. On this basis, the capitalist class hopes to "restore" its production by winning the markets of the world from its competitors. The chief immediate tactical aim, in putting this stupendous plan over on the workers, is expressed in the Hoover "stagger plan," to divide the work (and also the wages, on a lowered scale) among those at present unemployed, presenting this as a substitute for insurance and relief.

The Hoover "stagger plan" is the symbol of a fascist solution of the crisis.

Against this, the working class solution of the crisis presents itself in an unrelenting fight for unemployment insurance, immediate relief at the expense of government and employers administered by the workers, struggle against wage reductions and the speed-up, and for the seven-hour day without reduction of weekly pay.

The issue is thus presented sharply and definitely. Thus placed before the working class, there is no doubt which they will choose. Therefore the capitalist class has serious need of servants who will prevent this sharp presentation of the issue, who will confuse the workers, who will blind the workers to the definite choice they must make, who will create the illusion that the workers and capitalists can "jointly" solve the problem by reconciling their class interests in a common program. Such servants are the social-fascists.

Thus, when Hoover first announced his program on unemploy-

ment, it was at once given the blessings of the Reverend Norman Thomas, in the name of the Socialist Party. Thomas declared that Hoover's program was "socialist," and that he should be criticized not for his policy but only for not carrying it out quickly and thoroughly enough. This gave the theme for all the further music of social-fascist demagoguery. One and all, American Federation of Labor, Socialist Party, the Muste group, the renegades from Communism, raised their voices in various keys and variations, singing Hoover's fascist "stagger plan" to the tune of "socialism."

USING "SHORTER WORKDAY" FOR FASCISM

The social-fascists brought the "stagger plan" to the workers in the robes of "the shorter workday." "Have we not," they demanded to know, "been fighting for generations for a shorter workday?" Now is the opportunity to achieve this goal, therefore, when the capitalist class is trying to keep the masses from hunger and revolution without cost to itself. Hoover said "stagger plan," the "socialists" and the A. F. of L. said "shorter workday," but they both meant exactly the same thing.

At the Boston Convention of the A. F. of L., the Metal Trades Department took the lead in this demagoguery by demanding "five-hour day and five-day week," while at the same time approving the Hoover-Green compact of stabilizing wage-rates at the present level. With present hours of labor at approximately 50 hours per week (in manufacturing industry), the realization of this slogan means cutting the living standards of the workers by 50 per cent; and when the actual carrying out of the Hoover-Green agreement is shown to be actual wage-slashes in every industry and locality, the reduction runs from 60 to 75 per cent. In short, it is nothing but a disguised and *exaggerated* form of the "stagger plan."

The Socialist Party joined in the game with the slogan slightly modified to "six-hour day and five-day week." This was immediately taken up by the Trotskyite renegades, as their own "original discovery," and the Communist Party was denounced by them as an enemy of the working class because it refused to join the chorus that extended from Hoover to Cannon. Lovestone, after a little hesitation, also joined in. The united front for the "stagger plan" had indeed become a broad and inclusive one! Hoover's game was working fine!

HESITATION WITHIN THE COMMUNIST PARTY

This campaign of demagoguery was so brazen, so well-organized, and for a while so confusing in its effect upon the masses, that it even had its effect within the ranks of the Communist Party, caus-

ing hesitations in carrying through the task of unmasking the hypocritical capitalist rottenness behind the demagoguery, a task which required boldness and resoluteness.

Such dangerous hesitations, for example, reached the point where a well-known leader of the revolutionary trade unions in the U.S.A. could write in the magazine of the Red International of Labor Unions, and that we must give "serious and immediate attention" to the question of revising our seven-hour slogan downward, and declaring that failing to do this "we allow the social-fascists to appear as the champions of the shorter work-day." "This, he says, we must prevent at all costs." He sees no way to fight this demagoguery except by taking up the slogan of the demagogues! (Article of Bill Dunne, in *R.I.L.U. Magazine*, Feb. 1, 1931.)

Of course Comrade Dunne saw clearly that the social-fascists raised their slogans for 5-hour and 6-hour day because they "fit in perfectly with the Hoover scheme of rotating jobs and cutting wages." But he failed to see that his own proposal to try to take these slogans away from the social-fascists amounted to surrender to the demagoguery, and not to struggle against it. Hoover would, indeed, have scored a great victory if his campaign had succeeded in determining even the slogans of the Communist Party!

In discussing this question within the Party, some of our comrades developed this point of view in even more extreme and dangerous forms. They were so impressed by the campaign of demagoguery that they already thought our slogan of seven-hour day was causing us to "drag behind the movement," and even that "we are not leading the shorter-hour movement, but are actually opposing it." This was a serious error, and handicapped our campaign to expose the true nature of the social-fascist demagoguery as part of the Hoover "stagger plan."

AN ERROR OF THE POLITICAL BUREAU

In correctly combatting such hesitations and wrong views within the Party, our Political Bureau itself fell into error by formulating our slogan as "Seven-hour day and five-day week," instead of "Seven-hour day without reduction of pay." The latter is the correct general slogan of the struggle for shorter workday, and we should bring forward the seven-hour demand together with the five-day week only in such cases where the workers involved have already achieved the eight-hour day and five-day week, and where they are ready to practically organize a struggle for new gains along this line.

This error in our use of the seven-hour slogan is a long-standing one, it is true, and dates back before Hoover's "stagger plan." But

that does not change its political nature, which is that of a concession to demagogy, a weakness in combatting the wrong proposals to adopt the six-hour slogan. All such hesitations and vacillations must be cured if our Party is to properly lead the workers against the social-fascists, for real struggle against the Hoover solution of the crisis.

THE REVOLUTIONARY SOLUTION OF THE CRISIS

Our Party has, in the main, developed the correct line for the working class struggle under the conditions of the crisis. This line leads away from the capitalist solution of the crisis, and in the direction of the revolutionary working-class solution.

We have not sufficiently, however, drawn all the conclusions which must follow from this generally correct line. We have not sufficiently in a concrete manner exposed the social-fascists as the servants of Hoover and capitalism. And we have not developed for the masses a simple, popular formulation of the revolutionary proletarian solution of the crisis, in such a way as to directly connect it up with the everyday life of the workers, give them a broad view of the historical task to be accomplished, and at the same time make them understand the immediate steps that must be taken to bring the entire working class onto this proletarian path of struggle.

The development of our propaganda and agitation along this line, deepening it and developing all its revolutionary implications in the light of everyday reality, is the task to which we must give our best thoughts and energies. It is along this way that we will defeat the demagogy of the fascists and social-fascists and lead the million masses into struggle against capitalism.