

IV. TO THE MILLIONS WHO *ARE* AMERICA!

WE ARE witnessing a Presidential election campaign which is indeed a peculiar one. The issues and problems facing our country are fateful, of far-reaching importance, beyond anything in our national experience since the days of Abraham Lincoln. Yet the two major candidates, and their parties, are systematically blotting out every major difference between them on the most central issues. All possibility of choosing the future course of the United States, by casting ballots for one side or the other between Democratic and Republican parties, has been cut off from the voters, because both Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Willkie stand for essentially the same policies.

A man from Mars visiting us now might jump to the conclusion that this fact is evidence of a peculiar unanimity of opinion, sentiment and interest among the 46,000,000 American voters. But certainly no intelligent American could make such a mistake. Not only is the divergence among the voters deeper and sharper than in many generations, but also, and more important, the decisive majority is opposed to the course toward militarization and war upon which Roosevelt and Willkie are united. But in order to find electoral expression for that majority opinion, the voters have no alternative but to break their traditional political allegiance, and turn to one of the minority parties, among which only the Communist Party offers a genuine alternative.

“HEADS I WIN, TAILS YOU LOSE”

There is no unity of the people in support of the united policy of Willkie-Roosevelt. But there is a new-found unity among our

aristocracy of wealth and social position. The economic royalists, whose hatred was welcomed by the Roosevelt of 1936, are the very men who chose from their own top ranks the candidacy of Willkie, not to fight but to support the Roosevelt of 1940. Things have gone so far that one of the more candid and simple-minded Republican agitators, David Lawrence, uttered a cry of alarm the other day, and hysterically asked:

Why are business men so reticent in this campaign? Can anybody recall in recent weeks a single speech of importance by any outstanding industrialist or manager of any large enterprise urging the public to support Wendell Willkie? . . . Of what are business men afraid?

Mr. Lawrence has, of course, missed the point of the whole affair. The business men are no longer afraid of Mr. Roosevelt, and that is the nub of the election campaign as it stands today. Mr. Lawrence is still living in the atmosphere of a dead and gone era, in which Roosevelt was threatening to “master” the economic royalists. Roosevelt long ago abandoned that fleeting ambition. He is now leading the “Battle of America” to “master” instead the labor movement and the majority of the American people. He is busily proving to the economic royalists that he is indeed “indispensable” for them and their imperialist ambitions. So the business men are not afraid of him. They are quite content to let the campaign run its course, knowing that whatever the outcome, they have their man. It is the old game of “heads I win, tails you lose.” Tweedledum and Tweedledee were never so much alike as in 1940.

But the economic royalists are afraid—of the people. Even with the Presidential elections sewed up, they are afraid of the people. Even when Roosevelt can openly step outside the Constitution, on behalf of their class policy, and assume dictatorial powers in foreign policy, they remain afraid of the people. Even when conscription can be forced upon an unwilling people, for undefined imperialist aims, they are still afraid of the people. And that is why they even hesitate to speak up for the “barefoot boy of Wall Street” who comes right out of their own family circles.

They may well be afraid. This is 1940, not 1914 or 1917. Two and a half decades of experience with imperialist war and an imperialist peace of violence have taught the people much, and especially the working class. The people are developing a genius for undermining and defeating the best laid plans of the "upper classes," the real enemies of the people. The masses of the people may move slowly, but even when they only slightly stir, the economic royalists have learned to tremble.

THE PEOPLE WILL FIND A WAY

Consider, for a moment, that un-American and unprecedented measure, the conscription law, that has been forced upon the country by the Willkie-Roosevelt coalition and the mobilized money power of the land. That was a heavy blow against the people, and a signal victory for Wall Street. Wherever our ruling circles gather about the festive board and spill champagne in celebration of this victory, there is a grinning skeleton at the feast to spoil their pleasure. They are haunted by the memory of a great labor movement of eight to nine million members, so consciously and unitedly against conscription that even the most trusted and reliable political agents of the Roosevelt-Willkie coalition, the men they draw into their "kitchen cabinets" and defense boards to "represent" labor, did not dare raise their voices in support of that measure, much as they desired, much as they were pressed to do so.

They are haunted by the fact that, in a Congress these gentlemen own body, soul and breeches, a Congress which has been registering their policies with all votes against one, when it came to the conscription bill and the people began to stir only a little, two-thirds of the Republican Congressmen voted against the measure which their Presidential candidate had endorsed, and its only solid support came from the Solid South where three-fourths of the people are disfranchised.

The significance of the vote against conscription in Congress is not diminished by the fact that the Republicans are equally reactionary with the Democrats, that they indulged themselves the

luxury of this vote because they were assured of the bill passing anyway by Democratic votes, that they were guilty of the grossest opportunism and cynicism, that they were acting merely as the "Outs" giving a blow against the "Ins." All that is, on the whole, true, but it merely emphasizes another truth—that the Congressmen knew the people back home were so fiercely and consciously against conscription that it was "good politics," as the phrase goes, to go along with that sentiment. Yes, the fat boys have reason for sober second thought; in the imperialistic adventures they plan for America, the people will not remain for long mere passive pawns to be shoved around the chessboard of war.

Yes, in spite of the most gigantic conspiracy in American history to disfranchise the American people, to deprive them of a voice in the most fateful decisions our country has faced in many generations, the people find a way to make their voices heard and their influence felt.

A MOCKERY OF FREE ELECTIONS

That is why the economic royalists, the reactionaries who are hurrying America into a disastrous war, are afraid of the 1940 elections, despite the fact that they have the two major parties hog-tied and delivered before the event. That is why they are afraid of the Communist Party. Who knows, with the major candidates and parties united against a powerful swell of mass opinion and sentiment, that great numbers might not render their protest by voting Communist in November.

That is why the Roosevelt-Willkie united front forces are proceeding systematically to deprive the Communists of their political and electoral rights in this campaign. That is why they sent the West Virginia farmer, Oscar Wheeler, to prison for fifteen years, for a crime of soliciting signatures to a Communist election petition, on grounds of "false pretenses," although the petition was in pure legal form and no signer could have had the slightest doubt what he was signing. That is why in Illinois, the Kelly-Horner Roosevelt Democrats, on orders from Washington, staged mob violence

against Communist election workers, and are holding dozens in jail on trumped-up charges of "sedition." That is why, in several states, high officials have openly defied the election laws to arbitrarily rule the Communist Party off the ballot. That is why, in New York, they are openly talking about finding some subterfuge to deny the Communists the right to have our ticket on the ballot, as we have had in every election since 1920.

The Roosevelt machine has an additional incentive to suppress the Communist Party. In Pennsylvania, Illinois, Ohio and especially in New York—all pivotal states—it is agreed that the vote may be so close that the Communists, even without any great increase in strength, might be the balance of power. The Roosevelt machine, thinking that the Communists cannot possibly vote for Wall Street's Willkie, hopes to steal our votes on behalf of Roosevelt by denying the opportunity to vote for our own candidate. In the past, the Roosevelt forces sometimes had our voluntary support, and in 1938 they held New York State against Dewey and the Republicans only with our help, by less than the margin of votes we threw to them. Now that they cannot get our voluntary support, they hope to obtain it by trickery and violation of free electoral rights. Wendell Willkie himself admitted, in an article in the *New Republic*, that the Roosevelt Administration's actions against the Communists, and specifically against myself, had this immoral and partisan motive—but that was before he became the Republican candidate, and even before his secret pact with Roosevelt! Now he will not break his silence on this issue, even to keep an important bloc of votes from being stolen for his rival, Roosevelt.

The truth is mighty; it is terribly embarrassing even to the most powerful political personages and combinations, although it be spoken only by the weakest of voices against which newspapers and radio have been conducting an unexampled campaign of slander and prejudice. That is why I cannot promise you that I will continue to speak to you throughout the campaign; the powers that be consider it more convenient to have me behind bars for the next several years. That is why I cannot promise you that you will have

everywhere the opportunity to vote for the Communist ticket in November, for in many places our Party workers are being beaten up, or thrown into jail, or both, and our election petitions thrown out, their signers blacklisted and driven from their jobs.

And that is also why Candidate Roosevelt made a beautiful speech at Philadelphia the other day, extolling the virtues of free elections!

That is why, on the other hand, we firmly expect that among the millions of Americans, who truly believe in democracy, who truly believe in free elections, who truly hate conscription and war, who truly oppose our country being dragged into the bloody world scramble for empire with its profits for the few and starvation and death for the many—that among these millions who *are* America, a great number, greater than anyone now suspects, will vote Communist as the only way to vote in any degree as their own conscience dictates.

Speech delivered over the Blue Network of the National Broadcasting Company, September 25, 1940.