

# INTENSIFY THE STRUGGLE FOR JOBLESS INSURANCE

By WM. Z. FOSTER.

THAT the capitalists of this country are resolved to make a sharp and severe struggle against the establishment of a government system of unemployment insurance should be patent to us all by this time. Their resistance to date and the tendencies of opposition which they are now showing must be a clear signal to us to dig ourselves in for a long and bitter struggle over this important issue. And, by the same token, we must enlarge and invigorate our battle for all forms of local relief and for the organization of the unemployed workers, in order to give real force to our fight for unemployment insurance.

The Hoover government, clearly expressing the big capitalist line, shows the deep hostility of the employer towards unemployment insurance, not only in its attitude towards the unemployed workers but also towards the drought-stricken farmers. Although the drought situation appears as a temporary emergency, the capitalists controlling the government resolutely refuse to extend direct state aid. This they consider would be not only setting a bad example for future farm relief situations (and they know there will soon be plenty more of such) but it would also establish a dangerous precedent for the workers and leave the door open for the dreaded "dole." So, with cold-blooded brutality the government washes its hands of responsibility and reduces the whole question to one of private charity. What matter it that millions of useful producers are actually slowly starving. The main thing is to avoid the "dole" and thus "save the country from Socialism."

This bitter resistance to state unemployment insurance is of great political significance. It is a further manifestation of the growing intensity of the capitalist crisis, both in this country and abroad. Before the war in those countries of Europe where the question of unemployment insurance became a living issue there was no such desperate resistance by the employers. On the contrary, in England, Germany, and other countries state unemployment insurance were instituted with relatively little struggle on the part of the workers. This was because capitalism was definitely on the upgrade, its crisis was not so acute, unemployment was not so great, international competition was not so keen, the conditions of capitalist development left a certain margin of play.

But now the situation has basically altered. The crisis has enormously deepened, unemployment has become gigantic, competition is of the cutthroat type. Consequently the question of unemployment insurance everywhere becomes a most vital one. That is why the capitalists here resist it so fiercely; that is why the capitalists all over Europe, with the active support of the social fascists, are busy emasculating the state unemployment insurance wherever they can, by cutting the benefit rates, disqualifying workers

for the benefits, etc. Throughout Europe there is a strong movement among the capitalists for the abolition of unemployment insurance altogether. Mussolini is one of the spokesmen of this tendency. Hence, American imperialism, as yet free from the burden of unemployment insurance and determined to retain every advantage in the fierce international competition, will fight hard against its establishment in this country.

In this era of decaying capitalism and with mass starvation becoming a growing phenomenon in every capitalist land, even in "God's Country," the question of unemployment insurance becomes a major political issue for the workers. The fight of the workers is to establish such government benefits where none exist and to raise the rates in those countries where although already in force, always are in inadequate amounts. This means that we must, as I said at the outset, intensify our whole struggle against unemployment—for state unemployment insurance and for every form of local and state relief.

The fight for the Workers' Unemployment Insurance Bill must go on. We must not assume that it is finished when the Workers' Delegation presents it to Congress on Feb. 10. That only opens up a new phase of struggle for us. We may be sure that the capitalist government will ignore our Bill, and thus make it necessary for us to go to the masses with a fresh campaign for renewed struggle. Our keynote must be an insinuation of our fight on every front.

Following the February 10 demonstrations our most immediate and important task will be to organize a gigantic turn-out of the workers all over the country as part of the great international unemployment demonstration on February 25. This must be of a real mass character and militant. It must far overtop March 6th. The situation is ripe for the greatest workers' demonstration this country has ever seen. All the work that we have done up to date among the unemployed must be culminated into this gigantic protest against mass starvation. And, in turn, the February 25 fight must be not the end of our work but the beginning of such struggles upon a still greater scale.

In this fight for unemployment insurance our Party and the TUUL have a historic duty and opportunity. The working class can and will force the adoption of state benefits for unemployed workers. But how soon this is done, how much these benefits will be, and whether the unemployment insurance will be a strike-breaking arrangement or of real value to the workers, will depend upon the extent to which we are able to mobilize the workers for struggle against the capitalists and their social fascist allies. Undoubtedly at the present time the great mass of the workers favor the establishment of unemployment insurance. In so educating them we have been the principal subjective force. Now we must organize and lead them in successful struggles for its establishment.