

# Opportunity and Danger Confronting the Party

By WM. Z. FOSTER

A GRAVE danger facing our Party is that it should not fully appreciate the deep radicalization now taking place among the masses and not take the utmost advantage of the unexampled opportunity to organize and lead these masses in struggle and to build itself up in so doing. Many signs indicate that this danger is actual and real. Undoubtedly there is a far-reaching underestimation of the radicalization and also of the leading role of the Party in the existing situation. This tends to make the mobilization of the Party more difficult; it weakens all our campaigns and struggles. It must be overcome at all costs and the Party thrown militantly into the fight at every point.

During the period of "high" prosperity it must be admitted that we were very much isolated from the masses, not only organizationally but ideologically. Save for some sections of mining and needle, the workers did not understand us or our program. They tended to look upon us pretty much as an extreme sect which had little to do with their actual life. And the worst of it was that we tended to fit ourselves into this sectarian isolation, both ideologically and by our general methods of work.

But now a fundamental change is beginning to take place in the attitude of the masses towards our Party and its program. Great masses of workers, under the press of circumstances, are beginning to be more responsive to us. On the one hand, in the midst of the deep economic crisis and confronted with wage cuts, unemployment and mass starvation, these workers are becoming distinctly more responsive to our struggle slogans. Our program begins to become intelligible to them. And on the other hand, the great rise of Socialism in the Soviet Union is also having profound effects upon them. Even the most backward of workers are beginning to realize that something very important and revolutionary is taking place in the U.S.S.R. More and more the advanced elements are seeing in

## For Revolutionary Parliamentarism

"Anti-parliamentarism", in principle, in the sense of an absolute and categorical repudiation of participation in the elections and the parliamentary revolutionary work, cannot, therefore, bear criticism, and is a naive, childish, doctrine, which is founded sometimes on a healthy disgust of politicians, but which does not understand the possibilities of revolutionary parliamentarism. Besides, very often this doctrine is connected with a quite erroneous idea of the role of the Party, which in this case is considered not as a fighting, centralized advance guard of the workers, but as a decentralized system of badly joined revolutionary nuclei.

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the U.S.S.R. the way out of the present intolerable crisis, and to correspondingly take it more seriously. More than that, these workers inevitably tend, to some degree or other, to connect up our Party with the success of the Five Year Plan.

Our recent experience contains many practical demonstrations of the new fighting spirit of the workers and their growing readiness to accept the leadership of our Party. Typical among these were our big unemployed struggles in Chicago, Cleveland and Detroit, the strike movements in Western Pennsylvania, Kentucky and Colorado, the Scottsboro campaign, the successful Party recruitment, the huge mass character of our May First demonstrations, etc.

But it is clear that the Party does not fully realize the significance of all this. We do not entirely appreciate the changing attitude of the masses towards our Party. There remains too much of the old feeling of sectarian isolation. There is not enough of a Bolshevik confidence in the ability of the Party to lead the masses, not enough of a realization that the Party is in fact as well as theory, becoming the real mass leader. At its worst this sectarian lack of confidence results in the development of theories, or the practice, that the masses of workers just beginning to wake up must pass through the stage of Social Fascist organizations and illusions before they are ready for Communist leadership.

All this is bound up with and greatly worsened by our generally sectarian approach to mass work which the resolution of the recent Plenum of the Central Committee so sharply corrects; the failure to concentrate upon shop work and shop organization, the sectarian handling of partial economic demands in the everyday struggles of the workers, the formal and sectarian application of the united front tactics, etc. All these sectarian methods and viewpoints prevent the Party from coming forward effectively as the mass leader of the workers.

It is necessary that these sectarian tendencies to overcome as quickly as possible. The Party must fundamentally improve its mass work at once. It must break with the old methods and outlook. It must make the turn that the Comintern has so long insisted upon. It must resolutely come forward as the leader of the workers. All its mass campaigns must reflect the new turn. Only in this way can the Party rise to the height of the great tasks and opportunities confronting it in the present situation of rapidly growing struggle and radicalization of the working class.

### The Election Campaign and the Struggle Against Social Fascism.

Especially must the Party throw all its forces into the election campaign and make a determined effort to apply the new methods of mass work. The developing campaign will not only be a great opportunity for the Party, but also a severe test. It will demonstrate to what extent the Party can free itself from sectarianism and formalism, to what extent it is conscious of its leading role in the sharpening class struggle. The election struggle, better perhaps than any other of our present mass campaigns, will most clearly indicate our ability or failure to really understand and apply the resolution of the Central Committee Plenum.

Our enemies are keenly awake to the situation and we must be also. Demagogues of all kinds are busy to confuse and mislead the awakening workers. The Socialist Party aims to utilize the election campaign to rebuild its scattered forces. It is throwing all its energy into the campaign. McAllister Coleman expresses their sentiments when he says: "The Socialists go into the struggle of the presidential campaign, knowing very well that such an opportunity as now presents itself may not be repeated in their life-time". Our Party must be even more awake to build itself, to lead the workers in effective struggle against the bosses and their Social Fascist agents.

The coming election campaign offers our Party the opportunity for the greatest mass mobilization in its history. We should be able, if we rise to the occasion, to greatly stimulate the struggles and organization of the revolutionary unions and the minorities in the reformist unions; vastly strengthen our unemployment work and our work among the Negroes; we should be able to make the fight against war and for defense of the Soviet Union real issues among the American working class; we should be able easily to triple or quadruple the membership of the Party and the YCL, and we should be able to enormously increase our vote. The election campaign should mark a turning point in the life of our Party. If we can appreciate its opportunities and properly mobilize our forces it should carry us far along the road to a mass party and really establish our Party as a powerful factor in the American class struggle.

## Indiana Plans a Second State Hunger March

By NAT ROSS

THE Indiana Hunger March of May 2-3-4 of last year was the first step in the direction of a mass movement among the unemployed of the state. The militant response of thousands of Negro and white workers and the fact that the most enthusiastic meeting en roue was held in Marion, scene a few months before of the lynching of two Negroes, scared the lynch bosses of Indiana. The bosses fear was evidenced on May 22 in the vicious sentence given to Theodore Luesse, secretary of the Indiana Unemployed Councils and militant fighter for Negro rights.

At the same time the bosses saw that terror and jailing alone could not hold back the movement, as indicated in the statement of Jay E. White, Legion leader, that "the truth is that the statements these leaders make (in the Hunger March bills) are all true . . . It means that we must meet the situation with something besides force."

But neither terror nor demagogy has availed the bosses. In the past year the Unemployed Councils have developed from a sectarian movement in ten cities to a movement in thirty cities throughout the state, with an ever growing number of supporters and with an outlook for developing mass struggles. Despite this progress, the Unemployed Councils are still impermissibly weak compared with the possibilities.

### Weakness of Unemployed Movement

What are a few of the reasons for this weakness? First and foremost, the Unemployed Councils have been too much of a relief organization FOR the unemployed and not a fighting organization OF the unemployed. We were too sectarian and didn't get down to brass tacks, but acted as bureaucratic leaders from above without involving the masses themselves in the activity. We acted as the tail to the charities without feeling the real pulse of the masses and we did not use the slogan of unemployment insurance

states: "The garden plan is a trek back to the days of hand labor, to primitive standards of living, to the abandonment of the machine in industry. It is a return to semi-savagery. "A fine picture of American civilization!"

On March 16, in connection with the calling of a special session of the State Legislature for tax "relief," Governor Leslie declared he would oppose the special session because "what if they should come here and appropriate one million dollars for the unemployed?"

This open hunger talk was repeated on March 26, but the governor raised the ante to 25 million dollars, which was the demand of the Unemployed Councils of Indiana. But under the pressure of the Unemployed Council and especially as a result of the realization of the broad support to this demand for a 25 million dollar immediate appropriation, the governor was forced to change his tone, and on April 21 declared: "I have been misunderstood about not wanting to call a special session for fear that something would be appropriated for those in need. I would only be too glad to do so, but the constitution of the state does not permit it." The nightmare of hundreds of elected delegates from all over the state and thousands of workers marching up the State House steps demanding food has already scared the governor.

### On to the Indiana Hunger March.

The Conference of the Indiana Unemployed Councils, which will be held on May 8 at 2 p.m. at 932 1/2 S. Meridian St., in Indianapolis, will bring together delegates from the committees of the unemployed throughout the state and fraternal delegates from labor unions and workers' organizations. The conference will lay final plans for a gigantic State Hunger March in June, to be preceded by militant local struggles throughout the state. The whole program of the Hoosier bosses indicates that only by the most persistent, bitter and militant mass battles