

Foster Hits Doubt

By JOSEPH NORTH

THEY will be celebrating William Z. Foster's 74th birthday in a few days, March 18, but it was virtually impossible to get him to talk about that. Not, he indicated, when the first contingent of Smith Act victims is due out of prison March 1. That's what he wanted to talk about.

The man who is revered by hundreds of thousands in America and whose name is known to millions on all the continents spoke joyously about the imminent conclusion of the prison sentences Eugene Dennis and his comrades are serving. But, he said simultaneously, it is imperative for every understanding worker to protest against the authorities' intention to re-arrest them under the second section of the Smith Act.

"This outrage," he said vehemently, "could not happen in any country of the world. Nowhere would they flout the idea of double jeopardy as our authorities do."

The man whose work and whose ideas on the organization of trade

unions and on politics over half a century have stamped him as the foremost labor authority in the land said the workingclass will welcome the Smith Act defendants as dauntless crusaders for their cause.

"It is not lost time," he said. Workers understand these matters better than many are inclined to think. "You can rest assured," he said, "that the hardships the Smith Act victims suffered are not forgotten."

THE EYES of the man who is nearing three-quarters of a century and whose vigor is so fresh, sparked as he spoke of the "latest outrage," the conviction of Claude Lightfoot. Foster said this political crime was engineered by both parties that are vying with each other in red-baiting in a manner unheard of in any other country, and "who violate every democratic principle in this country."

Wholesale perjury, he said, is the basis for convicting these defendants but perjury is not only committed by informers and stables of stoolpigeons the Department of Justice summons to the stand. Everybody officially connected with the prosecution is associated with "false testimony," he said. "All are guilty." The Matusow case has merely lifted the curtain; it is no isolated case, but is merely representative of the whole system of perjury.

The Communist leader said that if justice really prevailed in this

country indictments would be out against many in the Department of Justice for their work in coaching such witnesses Matusow.

"The exposure of the infamous system of informing, of the stool-pigeon," he said, "is one of the major tasks of all in Labor."

FOSTER described the men due out of prison as "stalwart sons of the American working-class" and he spoke warmly of their comrades, their Party, which he said, is in "its heroic age." It has carried on despite great difficulties, and "is being steeled in this time of adversity. The Communist Party of the U.S.A. has demonstrated the same superb qualities you see elsewhere around the world."

FOSTER was born in Taunton, Mass., 74 years ago of Irish immigrant parents. He was reared in a home that resounded with talk of the Irish struggle for free freedom; his father was a crusading Fenian. At the age of seven Foster left school to sell newspaper. "Denied an education and living in a poverty-stricken home, I early felt the iron of the class-struggle sink into my heart."

He saw his first strike at 15, in Philadelphia where his family lived then. The workingclass youngster read every book he could beg or borrow. Blessed with an amazingly retentive memory he lost little of what he read. He was a natural student even as he



WILLIAM Z. FOSTER

Is This the Twilight Of the Informer?

By MARION BACHRACH

THE news on February 15

one of the false accusers, was admitting the "shining truth" in the same Foley Square court house.

shining truth open the prison doors, behind which Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Betty

The Jeopardy

worked the customary 12-hour day in fertilizer plant, lumber camp, on the railroad, and the many other jobs he took then. By 19 he decided that socialism was the answer to his questions. Henceforth his life blends with the development of the American workingclass.

In early manhood he became the leader of vast strikes to organize American labor; most notably, that of Chicago's 200,000 packinghouse workers and later, in 1919, the 400,000 men in steel, the nation's primary industry. He was successful in organizing the two first mass-production industries ever organized in America.

As he wrote in his pamphlet *Unionizing Steel*, 1936, written for the benefit of the CIO in their organizing campaigns: "I was never one of those who considered the organization of workers such a huge task. The decisive thing is to go about the work with the necessary resources, determination and flexibility of tactics."

His work as an organizer was ever coupled with his work as theoretician; he is a living exemplar of the Marxist idea that practice and theory must go hand in hand.

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HE FINALLY allowed our conversation to get around to his own birthday which he did not deem the dominant theme for this interview. In talking of his 74th birthday, he discussed his latest book which has for its stupen-

dous canvas the three international organizations of labor which he traces through the years from the time of the Communist League and the Manifesto prior to the First International. The book is printed by International Publishers.

It is the latest volume of an epic series of works that include the History of the Negro people, the history of the Communist Party in this country, the history of American imperialism.

Few scholars in today's America, or yesterday's, can match this remarkable achievement. The theoretician of America's labor movement spoke of his wish to get basic workingclass subjects down, "between two covers, simply, in one place" so that workers need not be obliged to seek out "the bits and pieces" of knowledge necessary to them, a search that could require months and years.

His objective "in this electronic age" is to condense but not oversimplify "fundamental matters that have great bearing on the workers' lives." He is already at work on a new book that will deal with the history of the world trade-union movement.

It was exhilarating to talk to this man—74 years of age—whose outlook remains so youthful, whose manner is buoyant with the knowledge that mankind is well on its way to victory over the forces of darkness that prevailed when he was born almost three-quarters of a century ago.