

DEFEND THE 40-HOUR WEEK!

Congress Filibuster Threatens to Kill Anti-Poll Tax Bill

10,000,000 Are Still Disfranchised By Poll-Tax

By SUSAN GREEN

As this issue of LABOR ACTION goes to press, it is the fifth day that the majority leaders in the Senate have been unable to bring before that body for action the Pepper-Geyer anti-poll-tax bill.

The minority bloc of Southern Democrats from the poll-tax states is using every possible parliamentary trick to keep the measure from the floor of the Senate. And if it does reach the floor, this clique of rotten reactionaries is prepared to filibuster till the end of the present session of Congress—when the bill will automatically die.

The poll-tax disfranchises 10,000,000 United States citizens of black and white skin—BECAUSE OF THEIR POVERTY. Through the operation of this kind of "democracy" in the states of Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina, 264,419 votes were cast in the 1940 elections out of a population of 9,300,000. The other four poll-tax states are Arkansas, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia. Senator Bilbo, leader of the filibustering gang, comes from Mississippi, where only 10 per cent of the citizens vote because it costs \$2.00 to exercise the rights of citizenship.

People have the notion that only the 14 to 20 filibustering senators are the culprits and that the rest of the 96 are as innocent as new-born babes. This is wrong. What of the fact that this anti-poll tax bill has been bottled up in the Senate for more than one and a half years? Nothing was done to bring the issue to a head sooner. Now there is the possibility of a filibuster continuing until the end of the year. In 1938, an anti-lynching bill was killed by thirty days of continuous talking.

There is also a popular misunderstanding about the terms of the anti-poll-tax bill in question. The impression is that it aims to give the citizens of the poll-tax states full voting rights. However, if the Pepper-Geyer bill should be passed, it would repeal the poll-tax laws only so far as they refer to primary and general elections of nominees and candidates to FEDERAL offices. The Southern oligarchy could still keep the poor from participating in local and state elections.

So it can hardly be said that the (Continued on page 2)

An Analysis of Imperialist Diplomacy—By Max Shachtman

Nine Lessons of the North African Invasion

The invasion of North Africa by Anglo-American troops is indeed a sensational event. It ought to be studied by every thoughtful workman. There is a good deal that can be learned from such a study as to the nature of the war and the way it is being conducted.

Of all the lessons worth learning from this invasion, and the circumstances surrounding it, there are nine that are of special value:

1. THE QUESTION OF WHO FIRES THE FIRST SHOT IS NOT IMPORTANT IN JUDGING A WAR OR THE PARTICIPANTS IN A WAR.

When one power is secretly or half-secretly preparing for war with another power, each side tries every trick in the book to put the moral onus of "starting" the war upon the other. Half the business of diplomacy is to cover up the war preparations of its own side and to provoke the other side into acts to make it look as if "they" are the aggressors, and "we" are the defenders. The other half of the business of diplomacy is to shoot out a steady stream of rumors about the enemy getting ready to attack us. Whether the rumors are based on fact or not is of secondary importance, because both sides are doing the same thing. The really important thing is to prepare public opinion to accept the fact that "our side" finally fires the first shot—to prevent the enemy from getting the jump on us by doing the same thing.

That is what the Japanese imperialists did at Pearl Harbor. That is what the American imperialists did at Casablanca, Algiers and Oran. The Japanese attacked an American colony, that is, they "freed" it from American imperialist rule in order to enslave it to Japanese imperialist rule. The Americans attacked a French or a Franco-German colony, that is, they "freed" it from the rule of one master in order to enslave it to another.

Imperialist wars are caused by the social system of imperialism. They are caused by the rivalry of the big imperialist powers for the control of the earth and its wealth, of raw materials, of cheap labor, of fields of investment, of markets and the like. Anything else they say is a lie to cover up this dirty reality.

Wars are not caused by the one who fires the first shot. The shot merely announces that the long period of preparation for the war has come to an end and the hostilities are on in earnest.

Imperialist wars are not divided between "defenders" and "aggressors." The only possible difference between two camps in such wars is that loot stolen in the past is defended by one bandit from the attacks of another bandit.

2. DIPLOMACY IS HYPOCRISY AND DECEIT PRACTICED WITH EQUAL CYNICISM BY THE IMPERIALISTS OF ALL COUNTRIES.

On the lips of imperialists, be they fascist or democratic, all talk of "open diplomacy," of "honest dealings with other nations," is a fraud from beginning to end.

If there were any doubts about it up to now, Secretary of State Cordell Hull's recent justification of his "Vichy policy" should be enough to dispel them.

Do you remember the tricky policy of Japanese diplomacy in Washington, of the protracted "peace negotiations" by Nomura and Kurusu while Tokyo secretly prepared to strike its military blow? Remember how this policy was used for cold-blooded military, imperialist reasons? Remember how indignant all the American statesmen and editors were after Pearl Harbor?

German colony, that is, they "freed" it from the rule of one master in order to enslave it to another.

"I have not become the King's Prime Minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire."

(Winston Churchill, November 9, 1942.)

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Cordell Hull says that the policy of "friendliness" and "negotiations" with Vichy had just as cold-blooded a series of objectives. It aimed at making possible Allied espionage in France and her colonies. It aimed at steaming up French politicians to undermine and overturn the government with which Washington was ostensibly maintaining friendly relations. It aimed "to pave the way and prepare the background in the most effective manner possible for the planning and sending of the military expedition into the western Mediterranean area, and to assist the movements supporting present British operations further east in Africa." (New York Herald Tribune, November 9.)

Change a couple of words here and there, translate it into Japanese, and you have the instructions Tokyo must have issued to Nomura and Kurusu.

The beginning and end of all imperialist diplomacy, in Berlin or Paris, in Rome or London, in Tokyo or Washington, is trickery, hypocrisy, dishonesty, cynicism.

That is, it is trickery, hypocrisy, dishonesty and cynicism when the "other side" practices it. When "our side" does exactly the same thing, it is honorable, noble, unselfish and, above all, damned clever. On all sides, however, its purpose is to keep the masses of the people in a state of ignorance and befuddlement. All they are supposed to know is how to obey orders and keep their mouths shut.

MIDDLE CLASS LIBERALS AND INTELLECTUALS ARE NOT TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY WHEN SERIOUS MATTERS ARE INVOLVED.

Between windjammers like editors of The Nation and New Republic, like self-styled liberal columnists with (Continued on page 3)

Boss Stooges In Congress Aim Barbs at Overtime Pay

Washington politicians are now waging a vicious fight against the forty-hour work week. And the bosses are cheering them on.

Their pretext is the developing shortage of manpower.

But the real objective is OVERTIME PAY and the lowering of labor standards. They talk about manpower shortages, but refuse to employ millions of Negro men and women.

The big bosses and their political mouthpieces see a golden opportunity to lengthen the work week and shorten wages—to make the workers give more and get less.

Their motivation is to force labor back to pre-union wage standards. And, if they succeed now, they know that labor will have a tough job regaining after the war what it loses during the war.

Take the Truman Committee report on manpower made public the other day. It comes out for the forty-eight-hour week with overtime to be paid in war bonds—NOT IN CASH.

For all practical purposes this proposal would lengthen the work week WITHOUT ANY ADDITIONAL PAY. Workers would toil and sweat even more than now but have nothing to show for it to meet their daily needs—nothing except the possibility of converting the war bonds into cash in the DISTANT FUTURE. Already the Department of Commerce is talking about the "IMMOBILIZATION" of war bonds in the post-war period.

In making this proposal for the payment of overtime in war bonds, the Truman Committee merely paves the way for wiping out all overtime pay for the eight hours worked from forty to forty-eight a week. THIS IS THE REAL AIM OF THE BOSSES, because it is a known fact that workers in war industries are already working 48, 60 and in some cases 72 hours a week.

The New York Times, which (Continued on page 4 in edit. col.)

Sit-Down Wins Pay Raise for Sperry Workers

AFL Foundry Workers and CIO Grinders Join in Proof That Militant Shop Action Gets Best Results Every Time

By W. CLIFF

Sperry Gyroscope Co., which has been conducting an all-out offensive against its workers in an attempt to stymie the union drive, came a-cropper on Friday the 13th, when workers in the foundry at the Nassau plant staged a successful sit-down strike.

The company, taking advantage of the "do-nothing" influence of the leadership of Local 450, UE-CIO, which is leading the organizing drive, has been trying to split the workers by various means, among them a "raise" granted a few weeks ago, which jacked up the pay of the new learners, but "froze" the pay of the "unskilled" workers and denied increases to most second-class and first-class men. Few workers (as reported in last week's LABOR ACTION) were fooled by this trick, and correctly directed their resentment against the company.

The situation had been further provoked by the arbitrary firing of

Mike Orfink, president of Local 450, because of his union activity. The union acted quickly to prevent action by the workers on this issue, but resentment had been at white heat.

On Friday, when the pay slips were distributed, the men discovered that the company was attempting to cheat them of one hour's overtime pay by taking advantage of the two-hour holiday on Election Day.

AFL-CIO Sit-Down

Indignation reached its peak in the foundry among the foundry workers, who have a closed shop contract with the AFL, and the grinders, who are almost 100 per cent UE. They had demanded a raise from the company and were expecting it in this pay check. When they saw that they had not received it, but instead had been penalized for voting on Election Day, they went ahead.

They sat down—unanimously—both AFL and CIO. As one of the UE stewards put it: "It was nobody's idea; everybody thought of

it at the same time. The foundry stood still. The boss came running down and told the enraged workers that they were hurting production by striking. The men didn't move."

"This isn't a strike," they said. "Every man has a right to stop working when he's not getting paid. We don't think we're getting paid for our work, so we're all stopping together."

Faced with this solidarity of the workers, the company promised the men their raise. "You'll get it in your next pay check," they said. "Nothing doing," answered the stewards. "You promised us that last week. We don't go back to work unless we get it today. No pay, no work."

The AFL rank and file chose a delegation to go to the personnel office. Since they belonged to a union which had left such things to the "business agents," none of them were acquainted with such procedure, so they asked the CIO stewards to go with them. The UE stewards

took leadership of the stoppage and took the AFL militants to the office.

Grant Wage Raise

Twenty minutes after the sit-down began the company agreed to grant raises, effective immediately, and the men went back to work. The victory was complete. Later in the day the men received their raises.

The Sperry Co. was beaten by the unity and militancy of the workers in the shop, foremost among which were the UE shop stewards, who acted as real spokesmen for the men.

Where the union leaders had hesitated, restrained the men and confined their activity to petitions, the shop leaders conducted real union activity and won a real union battle. While the men had received nothing from the "do-nothing" telegram-sending policy of the organizing drive, twenty-minutes of their own determined action had defeated the company and gotten them what they demanded. The foundry workers

have learned the type of tactics to use.

Sperry workers are slowly learning the strength that lies in their unity, the victory that comes when they act together. They are learning that unionization can succeed only by an offensive against the company, based on militant action, an offensive that must depend upon the shop stewards and the other militants of the rank and file. They have a right to demand that the union leadership learn this lesson also.

Where they have once succeeded they can succeed again. The success of the sit-down was explained by one of the UE stewards in the following words:

"The men won because they knew they were strong when they acted together. Every man knew he could count on the guy next to him to back him up."

When the rest of the Sperry workers learn this lesson they will take real union action for a real union contract.

David Coolidge Reports on CIO Convention

Political Questions Dominate Floor at Boston CIO Convention

By DAVID COOLIDGE

The fifth constitutional convention of the CIO held in Boston last week was a political convention. Not, however, a working class political convention, despite the fact that all of the delegates were working people and all represented working class organizations.

It was a political convention in that the overwhelming majority of questions which came before the convention and on which discussion was held and position taken were political questions. They were, most of them, questions involving decisions by the government because they were matters that have to do

primarily with the prosecution of the war.

Labor is obviously involved, but the way that this convention proceeded was just about the same way the Democratic Party or any group of employers would have approached the questions under consideration. This isn't completely true, of course, because a group of employers would have put their private business interests first, war or no war. This was brought out again and again in the convention when the various resolutions were under discussion.

One delegate emphasized the fact that the convention was really a

political convention when he pointed out, in the discussion of the resolution on "Recent Elections," that the majority of the resolutions to come before the convention dealt with "politics." They dealt with questions in which the government was involved and which the government by act of Congress or by decree has taken under its control. They were matters, therefore, that throw the trade union movement not so much into relationship with the employers but with the federal government. Furthermore, it was clear from the discussion that many of the delegates had come to the convention with the feeling that the government had not done so well. The employers

were pleased pretty much as they pleased, and it was only labor that was being controlled by the government.

This was the situation that faced this fifth annual convention. The leadership of the CIO had given up the right to strike. They had yielded to the employers and Roosevelt on the "premium pay." They had tried to set up Nelson's labor-management committees as a substitute for Murray's industrial councils. They had subordinated the entire struggle of the mass production workers for greater security to the demand of Roosevelt and the bosses that labor sacrifice for the war. That is, the leadership had said that

labor must wait until the war is won and over before the CIO can make any further advances or even hold its own.

We have said that it was a political convention. Here are the main resolutions of a distinctly political nature that were acted on favorably: a resolution commending Murray for his support of Roosevelt and the war, total war mobilization, manpower, labor unity, United Mine Workers of America, labor-management production committees, recent elections, stabilization of national economy, the second front, Atlantic Charter and India, poll-tax, Hitler's puppet

states, agriculture and the war, farm workers and the war, war program for federal workers.

Not only was the convention given its political nature by the content of these resolutions but also by the presence of government representatives, notably Assistant Secretary Bard of the Navy Department and Senator Pepper. To these one must add Sidney Hillman, who was present to make a come-back and to whoop it up for unconditional unity with the AFL in the interest of the "war effort."

Hillman consumed the time of the convention with a long speech trying to vindicate his record in

the OPM. The only impression that one could possibly draw from Hillman's remarks was that here was a labor leader who had been discarded and kicked out by Roosevelt and the bosses when they had no further use for him.

The speech made by Bard was a very crude and dull affair. The only things that made it possible to listen to it without falling asleep were his demand that the workers produce more per man and his remarks about the second front. "We can increase the output per man in our war industries," said Bard, "and labor can carry the ball and furnish the lead."

(Continued on page 2)

