

LABOR ACTION

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Liberals Yield to Political Panic As They Join Assault on Civil Liberties

By R. FAHAN

If a matter of fundamental importance were not involved, there would be something indescribably comic about the Senate debate on "anti-Communist" legislation. Consider the following picture:

The original legislative proposal for "dealing with Communists" was the Mundt-Ferguson bill: it proposed to register all Communist and Communist-front organizations (no definition offered—a mere detail, of course) and to require Communist organizations to provide a list of members. This bill was denounced by those intrepid heroes, the Senate liberals, as being undemocratic, a violation of the Constitution and—in their eyes most important of all—difficult to enforce.

They, the Senate liberals, would come through with a democratic solution to the "Communist problem." They would not succumb to hysteria. They were men of large social vision, who understood that you cannot oppose ideas with clubs.

CONCENTRATION CAMPS

The liberal proposal was... the Kilgore bill, which grants the president the right to throw Communists and, as the New York Times chastely puts it, "others" (who?—a detail, of course) into "detention camps," which, translated from "newspeak" into English, means concentration camps. Now you see, of course, that the ADA did not labor in vain when it sent Humphrey and Douglas to the Senate; that Arthur Schlesinger Jr. knew what he was talking about when he called for a "vital center" against both right and left "extremes."

For it is perfectly clear that if merely registering Communists is the reactionary solution, throwing them into concentration camps is the genuine liberal, Jeffersonian solution. Or, to translate back into "newspeak": the solution of those who believe in "human values."

But the comedy does not end here. As Jimmy Durante used to say: it's only beginning, folks, it's only beginning.

A furious debate takes place in the Senate. Senator McCarran, who is responsible for preventing the passage of legislation to help DPs, rushes in with a denunciation of the Kilgore bill. It is, he says, unconstitutional; a violation of liberty; nothing less than "gestapo proceedings." He proposes a modified (read: "stiffened") version of the Mundt-Ferguson bill, which would "merely" register Communists but not prevent them from functioning publicly.

The liberals strike back: they will not be daunted in their struggle for human values. No, they say, a proposal to register Communists is wrong because... the

wrong people may find themselves registered, and besides those stubborn reds would be so presumptuous as to challenge the legislation, take it to court, and thus make it a judicial issue for several years.

(Meanwhile, it is not clear whether the Kilgore bill contains a habeus corpus provision or not—but, no quibbling now, a mere detail.)

The forces of reaction are locked with the forces of liberalism: principles are involved, tradition appealed to. And then a sudden solution: Pat McCarran is no statesman for nothing! He proposes that both bills be rolled together in one big bundle of repression: register the Communists and, "in case of emergency," toss them into concentration camps too. Joy is unrestrained: the opponents who had previously denounced each other as violators of the Constitution and advocates of gestapo proceedings, unite. The ADA's heroes—Humphrey, Morse, Douglas, Benton—see their duty clearly. They vote for the new bill, for registration and concentration camps. Men of vision, they have stood firm in defense of human values...

And this is the end of the comedy.

The tragedy is still to come. It now seems likely that some variant of the McCarran bill will be passed (with or without habeus corpus, that wretched detail) and that either President Truman will renege on his promise to veto it or that his veto will be overridden. And then, with the help of Pat McCarran and the ADA, we shall have the most repressive legislation in the U. S. since the alien and sedition acts.

CONCENTRATION CAMPS

That the proposal to send Communists to concentration camps is reactionary, anyone can see on the face of it. It is perfectly probable that the U. S. concentration

camps would not be as brutal as those in Hitler's Germany or Stalin's Russia. And if any liberal thinks to gain consolation from that probability, he is welcome to it. But surely that is cutting pretty thin the cause for which atom bomb war is supposedly necessary: "humane" concentration camps as against brutal ones.

What should be emphasized is that the other proposal, for registering Communists, is in its own way equally reactionary. For one thing, it sets up a special class of political helots, who must expose themselves to public deprecation and discrimination. Where everyone else has the right to keep his political views and affiliations private, the Communist (a term that remains undefined) is required to

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"Military Drive For Power" — —

Disturbing signs of militarism in American life have been detected by James A. Brownlow, president of the Metal Trades Department of the AFL, whose speech at the department convention was reported as follows in the newspaper Labor:

"One of the hardest struggles, Brownlow said, has been to block the steady encroachments of the military in the field of civilian rights."

"He cited replacement of civilian craftsmen in navy yards and army installations by men in uniform; attempts by the 'brass hats' to break down craft standards in such establishments, and other efforts to curtail rights of workers."

"This gradual usurping by the military of functions which are essentially civilian does not augur well for the future of our nation," Brownlow warned.

"It is not difficult to envisage military dictatorship, with military personnel under military conditions, carrying out every phase of defense operations, including those which are civilian in character."

"Brownlow stressed that 'in the formation of our government it was never supposed that the military branches should be a law or body unto themselves.' He urged alertness against the military 'drive for power' over civilians and declared that monarchies and dictatorships elsewhere 'prove the wisdom of continuing civilian control in this country.'"

We wonder — from where does Brownlow think this military pestilence has come? After all, in the last elections the workers followed the AFL's political advice, and we were told that a great victory was won for the people. Yes, we wonder...

FOR BOLD MEASURES

The more radical section of the party (we are only considering those sections of the party which are represented in its high councils) expressed themselves in favor of proceeding with bold measures to try to regain the political initiative. But their policy seemed to have little chance to carry the day.

(Turn to last page)

BLP Wins Steel Vote Under Left Wing Pressure

By LARRY O'CONNOR

By a vote of 306 to 300 in the House of Commons the British Labor Party has beaten back the Tory-Liberal attempt to force a new election. The contest came over a "no confidence" motion presented by Winston Churchill when the Labor government announced that it would proceed with the nationalization of the steel industry on the earliest date possible under the law.

The determination of the Labor Party to go through with the nationalization of steel at this particular time has aroused widespread comment and speculation throughout the world.

When the LP was returned to power at the last election with its very slender majority, it seemed that the more conservative wing of the party was strengthened. Attlee, Bevin and Morrison seemed to accept the view that a wide section of the middle class which had voted Labor in 1945 had been alienated by the too rapid pace of nationalization. Their reaction to the squeeze-through victory last winter led them to adopt a program of "consolidating" the previous nationalizations and trying to remove some of the austerity from British life. At that time it was a widely accepted idea that the BLP would not press on with the actual nationalization of the steel industry which had been authorized by the previous parliament.

FOR BOLD MEASURES

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Can Marshall Save the "American Century"?

With the unerring instinct for the superficial which characterizes it, the national press has all but obscured the meaning of the removal of Louis Johnson as secretary of defense.

It was a victory of the State Department over the military — which under the present circumstances means that it was a victory for those within the government who more or less clearly realize that in a war with Russia military means must be augmented by political ones if the present military weakness of the United

States and its allies is to be overcome.

Opposing the State Department were those military figures who view politics as marring the classic purity of military operations. Recent points of conflict have included the MacArthur intransigence on Formosa, the statement of Secretary of the Navy Matthews on preventive war, and (in slightly different fashion) Truman's fumbling of the Marine Corps squawk. Johnson is supposed to have had a hand in the MacArthur and Mat-

thews incidents and also to have been engaging in a little political trafficking with the Republicans over the issues involved.

HISTORY REWARDS EXPERTS

The current shakedown results from the efforts of United States capitalism to rise to the level which history is demanding of it in the political sphere. The administration is finding out the hard way that the time for amateurism in politics has long since passed. Johnson was given the post as a result of his work in

rounding up campaign funds for the last Truman campaign. Truman finds his existence hard enough without having to be burdened by incompetents — and boastful ones to boot.

That Johnson is in part being made a scapegoat is also true. But his program of arms economy, his juvenile boasting on the state of military preparedness, and the surprise which the Korean war was to him reflected nothing more nor less than administration policy on the political day.

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BLP Wins Vote on Steel --

(Continued from page 1)

The proposal to nationalize the steel industry as rapidly as possible under the law indicates that the LP leadership is thinking along somewhat new lines. This action points to the conclusion that the primary concern in the thinking of the LP leadership for its middleclass electoral following has been replaced by an even more pressing concern for the political reactions of the backbone of the party, the British working class.

Last week LABOR ACTION discussed the British Trades Union Congress at which a majority of the delegates rebelled against the General Council and voted to end the policy of voluntary wage restraint which has prevailed for five years. This was an ominous sign for the leadership of the BLP. With their own party congress in the offing, it seems that the leadership has decided to run to the head of the parade and to try to deflect it along paths which will be least dangerous to the labor bureaucracy.

To do this successfully, it is necessary for the leadership to convince the ranks that it has not softened in its determination to wrest power from the capitalist class of Britain. The TUC majority had demanded not only an end to the wage freeze, but also a statutory limitation on profits. There can be no doubt that if the Labor Party were to go on record for these policies at its congress the struggle with the Tories would become much more violent. Further, it would shift

from the purely parliamentary field to the industrial field. Thus, in the midst of the crucial negotiations over the militarization of Western Europe, the LP leadership would be confronted with a major outbreak of the class struggle at home.

The nationalization of the steel industry has been fought more bitterly by the Conservatives than any other measure proposed by the Labor Party. Most other major nationalizations were not opposed so much on principle as on the details of compensation or organization proposed by the LP. The industries to be nationalized were either very sick, or of such a nature that some form of major reorganization had been accepted as a necessity by all parties. The same is true of the social security measures and the national health service law.

But steel is highly profitable. It is also integrated with so many other industries that all parties realize that the logic of nationalization may take the LP much farther than was necessarily the case with respect to the other industries.

LEADERS PREFER ELECTION?

It was in this situation that the Labor Party high command decided to risk an end to the precarious balance in Parliament. When the leadership took this step it was fully aware of the possibility that it would be defeated and would have to go to the country for a new mandate. It seems reasonable to believe that the BLP leadership would not have been altogether unhap-

py if such had been the outcome. They may very well have reasoned as follows:

If the LP should win a parliamentary majority on this question, the leadership would be able to go before the party congress with the feather of a new victory over the capitalists in its cap. It could hope that this demonstration of boldness would disarm its left-wing critics to the extent that it would be able to win over the less adamant on the question of wages and profits and thus split the opposition.

If the Tory-Liberal bloc should win, the LP leadership would be able to go before the ranks and demand party unity and party loyalty during the electoral campaign. It would no doubt have played heavily on the idea that any rash of strikes for higher wages during the campaign would alienate the middle-class vote.

COMMUNIST PLOT

It is interesting to note that at precisely this critical moment the leadership of the Labor Party has discovered a "communist plot" to disrupt British industry through strikes. To people who know a little about the history of the British Labor movement a striking parallel comes to mind. In 1924, when the first Labor government was fighting an election in the face of rising dissatisfaction in its own ranks, the foreign office "discovered" an alleged letter from Gregory Zinoviev, then head of the Third International, purportedly giving instructions to the British Communist Party to fo-

ment a revolution. The "Zinoviev letter" was, of course, a forgery. But it served the purpose of turning the minds of the ranks away from their own legitimate grievances against the capitalists and against their own leaders in the first Labor government.

Now the Labor Party has suddenly discovered that the Stalinists have got instructions from their bosses in Moscow to foment strikes wherever possible so as to weaken the British armament program. There is no particular reason to doubt that such indeed have been the standing instructions to Stalinist leaders in all Western countries. But even capitalist commentators have raised an eyebrow at the "sudden discovery" by the Labor government that such is the case.

STALINISTS AND STRIKES

Is it speculating too far to say that this particular "Communist scare" has been given its present emphasis for reasons similar to those which led to the discovery of the "Zinoviev letter"? Not only can it serve as a distraction for the British workers, but more important, it can be used as a club to beat down any legitimate strike movements on the part of anti-Stalinist left-wing leaders in the British labor movement under the cry that they give aid and comfort to the CP, or even that

any such movements must be and are inspired by Stalinists.

Of course, the Stalinists will seek to profit from the current dissatisfaction within the British working class. If the more militant elements of the anti-Stalinist left should be intimidated by the anti-CP scare and should abdicate their leadership of the growing demand of the workers for a limit on profits and higher wages, the Stalinists may well increase their influence. The same would be true if the LP leadership can undermine the growing militancy of the ranks through its steel-nationalization fight.

Socialists welcome the initiative taken by the Labor Party on steel, whatever may be the calculations which lie behind it. But they should not be diverted from their over-all criticism of the timidity of the general policy of their leadership. Nationalization of steel may be a red flag waved in front of Churchill and his colleagues. By itself it brings the British working class not much closer to the development of a really socialist policy. Even when steel is nationalized, workers' control in the nationalized industries still has to be won. The power of the British capitalist class still remains to be decisively broken. And equally important for Britain, a really socialist, internationalist foreign policy still has to be developed.

Marshall --

(Continued from page 1)

cal and military level. His worst mistake, from Truman's point of view, was to support the proponents of preventive war. But this might have been overlooked except for the fact that Johnson had become the object of a major political attack by the Republicans. He became a victim of political expediency.

The fact that the only person who could be found to replace Johnson was Marshall is an index to the seriousness of the situation. Marshall is old and ill. Nevertheless, the idea is widespread in capitalist circles that as long as he holds office Marshall will be the real director of foreign affairs for the United States. He is reputed to see eye-to-eye with Acheson on most problems, and to be considered by Truman as a veritable genius in international politics.

A few of the liberal political writers have been protesting, though not too loudly, about the appointment. The traditional principle according to which the civilian power in the government should be dominant over the military is being breached. In order to make Marshall eligible for this appointment the law, which provides that no one may become Secretary of Defense who has been in military service during the previous ten years, must be revised. This revision lays another brick in the military walling-in of the government, even though the appointment of this particular ex-general is calculated to re-establish control by the administration over its military caste.

NOT MORAL SCRUPLES

The most immediate result of the appointment of Marshall is the removal of the preventive war ideology from the first point on the agenda. This has little to do with moral scrupulousness, of course; the United States is not ready militarily for such a task, nor is it at the moment willing to risk the loss of world-wide political support which such a policy would entail.

But the concept has been launched and is guaranteed to arise again in the future—especially since atomic warfare confers an appreciable advantage upon those who can mount a well-prepared, total, initial attack.

The crisis around Johnson will not be the last of this order. Another one may be precipitated soon. What, for example, keeps Secretary of the Navy Matthews in office? It is not his knowledge. When he took office he stated with that bland effrontery which passes for honesty in United States politics that his acquaintance with naval affairs was confined to a certain knowledge about rowboats. He isn't a realistic politician: he has already put his foot in things with his remarks on a preventive war. There may be some changes made.

The "American Century," it seems, is running into a few obstacles. We never considered Stalin as exactly a brilliant intellect, but how he must rub his hands on occasion at seeing the happy innocents that United States political life nurtures. From the point of view of the United States, however, it is more than a matter of inept personnel. The perspectives offered world capitalism in decline are simply too narrow for present-day politicians. No matter how astute they may be as individuals, they are bound to appear sorry figures as they try to hold up the sagging structure.

Wolfgang and the Two Germanies

By BENNO SAREL

Here's a true story and one, alas, all too significant for German youth on both sides of the Elbe.

Johann Wolfgang is a young peasant of 18, living with his parents in a little Mecklenburg village in the Soviet zone. A life, narrow, poor and stifling. One day he is requisitioned to work for three months in the Soviet uranium mines in Aue, Saxony. He knows that working conditions there are very bad and that even a young man may return with his health broken.

He takes off and sneaks into the British zone. At the refugees' service, he declares that he wants to work in the Ruhr mines. He's given a railroad ticket to

Bochum, heart of the Ruhr. He goes to an employment office:

"Have you a birth certificate?"
"I'm a refugee; left secretly. I didn't take all my papers."
"Nothing I can do about it; no birth certificate, no work."

Wolfgang leaves Bochum on foot, headed east. Again he sneaks across the frontiers, reaches his village, takes his birth certificate, hits the frontier illegally for the third time and retraces his footsteps to the Ruhr, eating one day out of three.

He must take a medical exam, this time. He has no disease but is very weakened. Not eligible for work in the mines.

He leaves again, still on foot and penniless, this time toward Southern Germany. He begs.

Here and there he finds a few peasants to work for. But no work at a living wage; unemployment everywhere, even the countryside is choked with refugees. At Wurtzberg, he goes to an official welfare bureau. They give him five marks and stamp his identity card. Three days later, he erases the stamp and tries to touch another bureau for another five marks. They catch him and he flees to escape arrest.

A month later at Frankfurt, he finds work selling subscriptions to a fashion magazine. Net for Wolfgang: two marks per subscription. But business is slow. Constant walking has left his shoes in shreds. He gives them to a shoemaker but lacks the wherewithal to get them out again. So he forges six subscription blanks. The boss gives him six marks and Wolfgang gets his shoes. But the boss catches on quickly and Wolfgang is arrested the same evening.

Wolfgang is indicted; falsification of identity card and stealing. He is assigned a lawyer: "Of course, your honor, ladies and gentlemen, my client did wrong. But, your honor, ladies and gentlemen, if he is condemned, this young man will lose all faith in humanity, etc. . . ."

The prosecutor: "I demand the application of the law."
Judge: "Prisoner, what have you to say?"

The accused: "I want to go home to Mecklenburg."

Judge: "What? Home? In the Russian zone where everything is going so badly?"

The accused: "I know it's better here, but not for me."

Wolfgang receives a suspended sentence. Again, he starts walking toward Mecklenburg. For the fourth time he crosses the border illegally. He returns to his village and tries to put his affairs in order. He presents himself at the requisition service, ready to go to Aue.

"But you were missing! . . ." Today, Wolfgang is at Aue not for three months but for a year and in a punitive group. If he ever gets out, he'll probably be a beggar for the rest of his life.

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I. S. L. Autumn Social



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