

of Illinois and perennial seeker after the republican presidential nomination. Lowden is the beneficiary through marriage of the Pullman millions. He has set aside some of his riches to establish himself as a corn grower in Illinois and as a cotton-raiser in Arkansas. He was the hero of the December meeting of the American Farm Bureau Federation, just as he pushes himself forward at every other farm gathering in the Mississippi valley. The farmers think he has a program that will lead them out of this valley of woe. It is essentially the McNary proposition, in fact, Lowden endorsed the McNary-Haugen bill in the last congress. In the republican party, therefore, it is Lowden against Coolidge. Lowden, the "old guardist" republican exploiting the misery of the farmers to win political prominence against "Silent Cal," loyal office boy of the moneyed interests of the east. Capitalism will be equally safe with either. The south proclaims Lowden a "good democrat," but just how this solid democratic south is going to give Lowden any support in a presidential campaign is a mystery. The southern delegates to the republican nominating convention would be of some help. Some of these same farmers look with favor even on Charles G. (Hell an' Maria) Dawes, the Chicago banker. Senator Arthur Capper, the standpat Kansas editor, is also mentioned.

The south is also in rebellion against the democratic party leadership that is offered by Tammany Hall and its favorite son, "Al" Smith, governor of New York. The conservative democratic south threatens an alliance with the radical democratic west, the latter being led around by William G. McAdoo. But here other issues also arise. "Al" Smith is wet and Catholic. The south and west are dry and protestant, strongly tainted with Ku Klux Klanism. But the farm problem may well take prior position tearing at the vitals of both capitalist political parties. In this connection former secretary of agriculture, Edwin T. Meredith, of Iowa, is mentioned as "the farmers' saviour."

Shy at Class Political Action.

Little is said among the members of the farm organizations supporting this "last hope" relief legislation concerning independent political action. Mention of it is strictly taboo. Voice is found occasionally, however, for a threat to organize "a third party." That is all.

In spite of these efforts to steer shy of farmer-labor unity in the political struggle, it is highly significant that in the same week that the McNary bill was introduced in congress, pleading for favors from the capitalist state that would at best merely give some aid to the well-to-do farmers, and landlords, the bankers and grain speculators, leaving the working farmers as badly off as ever, there gathered in Minneapolis, Minn., the first conference of the Progressive Farmers of America that declared:

Farmers in the Class Struggle.

"The producers of wealth and the great combinations of capital have no interests that are identical. The struggle between these two classes will intensify until the toiling masses become organized so that they will

take over the machinery of production, distribution and exchange to the end that these agencies may be operated in the interests of the many instead of for the benefit of the few."

Thus the "Progressive Farmers" that began its fight in the state of Washington, on the Pacific Coast, plants its standards as a national organization at the headwaters of the Mississippi.

It represents the nucleus of class struggle in such farm areas as Washington, Montana, North Dakota, Minnesota and Wisconsin where it has already been successful in securing an organizational foothold.

The breaking away of agriculture from the domination of the two capitalist parties is also seen in the development of the farmer-labor movement. In Minnesota, the farmer-labor party, with a mass following, has wiped out the democratic party and faces the republican party as its only real contender. This was shown conclusively in the fall elections.

The same election campaign also shows that in North Dakota, where the non-partisan league still retains a foothold, there was sufficient virility in the drive for independent political action to place a farmer-labor ticket in the field opposed to the Frazier-Nye-Sorlie treason that would betray the farmers to the republican party.

In Washington, Montana, South Dakota and Oklahoma the farmers are also rallying with the city workers in support of the farmer-labor party movement. In Texas, where the Renters' Union was powerful before the war, the organizations of the farmers are developing an ever clearer class outlook.

The March Toward Power.

The actual dirt farmers and farm workers gradually realize, in increasing numbers, that "relief" legislation is not for them, that their only escape is through the abolition of the capitalist social order.

In Oklahoma alone, at this writing, 200,000 men, women and children are on the move, breaking off their past residence and farm relations and seeking new farms to cultivate as tenants. This annual movement of tenant farmers in Oklahoma alone includes more human beings than make up the entire population of Oklahoma City, Tulsa, Muskogee, Ponca City and Okmulgee, five of the state's largest cities. Here are 200,000 serfs seeking new masters.

The American farmer is not only being driven toward peasantry. Large masses in different sections of the country have already arrived at this lowly condition. But in the grip of peasantry, the American farmer will learn the road to power. He will join in the class struggle with the workers in industry. The brutalizing conditions being imposed by the capitalist overlords on millions of landless tenants throughout the fields of corn, wheat, cotton, rice and the lesser staple farm products, will help enlist new and growing numbers of adherents for the developing struggle for "A Labor Party in the 1928 Elections" and the ultimate abolition of capitalism. That is the call of the Workers (Communist) Party. American city and land labor must build its mass power separate from and opposed to the capitalist class to win its way from "Peasantry to Power."

THE FIVE DAY WEEK

By EARL R. BROWDER

"Six days shalt thou labor and do all they work." So reads the fifth of the great commandments and for sixty centuries it has been accepted as the divinely prescribed standard of economic effort. It is the perfectly fixed basis of human achievement and social contentment. So I regard the five-day week as an unworthy ideal. It is better not to trifle or tamper with God's laws. They cannot be improved upon."

THIS statement on an outstanding issue in American industry today was not spoken by a Church Bishop. It is by the President of the National Association of Manufacturers, John E. Edgerton. It expresses the social, political and economic program of the main body of American employers on the question of the position of the workers.

Another view is that of Henry Ford. At the close of September this year Ford announces that the 200,000 workers in his automobile factories would hereafter work but five days per week. Mr. Ford said that production is increasing so fast that soon the five days will produce as many automobiles as formerly in six; as the market cannot continue to expand, it was necessary to reduce the working force or their working time. Ford has figured out that it is more profitable to reduce the time. This is another point of view, largely confined to Ford, who operates under exceptional circumstances because his factories are far ahead of all others in the technique of mass production.

There is, further, the attitude of the leaders of the American Federation of Labor. Mr. Green, its President, fell into line behind the "open shopper," Henry Ford, in these words:

"America is now known as the land of high wages and industrial efficiency. It should also be known as the land of short hours, for short hours and efficiency go together wherever the right adjustment has been made. The American labor movement is strongly in favor of the five-day week wherever it is possible. We will work for progressive reduction of hours wherever this may be accomplished without retarding industrial progress."

A step farther than the A. F. of L. is taken by the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, an independent union which at its national convention last May instructed its officials to prepare to struggle for the five-day week.

And what has been effective in bringing this issue so sharply to the forefront in America?

A very simple fact: the Fur Workers' Union in New York City last January, having just come under the leadership of Communists, launched a strike in which one of the demands was for the five-day 40-hour week. After 18 weeks of struggle they were victorious.

All at once a great change took place. All the reformist wiseacres who had been cursing the "impractical and utopian" Communist demand for the five-day week suddenly began to hunt for "explanations." Mr. Green, who had tried to break the strike and to force the fur workers to settle for 44 hours per week, stepped up to claim the victory as his own and as a proof that class collaboration is good. The circulation of "The Ford Worker," a Communist factory paper, jumped up to 19,000 copies, and soon after Mr. Ford saw the light and made his sensational announcement.

So we see that the beginning of this five-day week movement, so revolutionary and "unrespectable," has led to its being accepted (with modifications) by both the A. F. of L. and by Ford. And it has aroused the masses to such an extent that Judge Gary of the Steel Trust and John Edgerton of the manufacturers' Association are terrified, and call God to their assistance to stem this new tide. "Don't tamper with God's laws," they cry.

The officialdom of the American trade unions is so corrupted that it never raises any issues for the betterment of the workers unless these demands are forced upon them by pressure from below. It is quite sure that the five-day week would never have been mentioned at the A. F. of L. convention but for the "inconvenient" fact that the Communists had led a victorious fight for it in New York. This is true beyond all question. But of course the militancy, and foresight of the Communist leadership was not alone sufficient. If militancy alone could win such victories, why should the British miners be suffering after six months of heroic struggle? The truth is that economic conditions in America are extremely favorable for an advance of new working-class economic demands.

The economic basis of this new issue is the unexampled increase in the rate of productivity in industry. In a study of this question (Social Economic Bulletin, No. 2, Profintern) I estimated that from 1920 to 1925 the general average of productivity of all industries had increased by 50 per cent. An inquiry by the National Industrial Conference Board (an employers' organization), published recently and noted in the N. Y. Times of Oct. 17, placed the rate of increase in productivity, from 1919 to 1923 alone, at 43 per cent. When it is remembered that even in 1919 production in the U. S. led the world in rate and volume, the enormous consequences of this expansion of forces may be dimly apprehended.

One of the most important effects was to put a stop to the expansion in numbers of the working class. Hitherto the growth of volume of production (pre-war 7 per cent to 14 per cent annually) was accompanied regularly

by an increase of the number of workers in industry (3 per cent to 8 per cent annually). But since 1920 while volume of production has expanded, the number of workers has actually decreased. This has had a weakening effect upon the trade unions, because it has tended to bring into existence a permanent body of unemployed workers already trained in industry.

A further weakening of the trade unions resulted upon their defeat at the hands of the "open shop" employers (steel strike, coal strike, "outlaw" movement, 1919). The "company unions" came into being, and soon had taken a million members from the trade unions. Panic stricken, the trade union officials plunged headlong into the new schemes of class collaboration which soon had transformed the trade unions into duplicates of the "company unions" in so many respects that they are now acceptable to many employers. This enormous weakening of the trade unions and the strengthening of the employers prevented any gains from being made by the trade unions during the "prosperity period of 1922-1925."

This is the first time in trade union history in America that a period of economic expansion has not been accompanied by a growth in trade unionism.

Events have proved, however, that the halt of the labor movement could not be made permanent. Soon, both employers and trade union officials found, to their dismay, that in order to keep the masses from following Communist leadership it was necessary to give them concessions and improvements. Even Judge Gary and the Steel Trust recognized this and, altho they had destroyed the unions in 1920, found it necessary in 1923 to grant the main demand of the strikers of 1920, namely the eight-hour day. In 1925, when the militant employers in the coal and textile industries were cutting wages and calling upon the Steel Corporation to join a national campaign to "deflate labor" generally, the Communists issued the slogan: "Strike against all wage cuts." Organized and unorganized workers responded in such fashion that the wage cutting move was halted. Speaking of the situation resulting, the Magazine of Wall St. said:

"It is understood by keen observers that the United States Steel Corporation would like to reduce wages but dare not.

"A major conflict is going on within the unions between the 'yellow' and 'red' factions. Although he has repeatedly failed to make a dent in the American Federation of Labor the figure of William Z. Foster, the Communist leader, still casts a sinister shadow. The solidification of the trade unions against revolutionists 'boring from within' has been a result of trade union supremacy and consequent contentment. A labor deflation, especially if accompanied by rising costs of living, would play into the hands of Foster and his following. They fear that Foster might succeed in doing in 1926 what he almost accomplished in 1919—the unionization of the industry. Until that industrial pace-setter, the U. S. Steel Corporation, disregarding the possibility, deflates wages, the tendency towards wage cutting will not have received its full impetus." (September 26, 1925, page 977).

The struggle against wage cuts in 1925 was the direct precursor to the movement for the five-day week in 1926. In the garment trades of New York, especially furriers and dressmakers, the reactionary officialdom had stood firm in alliance with the employers against any improvements in wages, hours, or union control. The

result, after a long and bitter struggle which took on some of the aspects of civil war, was that the left wing gained leadership over these two unions. Then came the great furriers' victory for the five-day week, followed by the capmakers' strike and the 40,000 cloakmakers' strike for the five-day week. After a five-months' struggle the majority of the cloakmakers won the 40-hour, 5-day week.

But what, it is asked, compelled Henry Ford to grant without a struggle the five-day week to his 200,000 workers? There is no union in Ford's factories.

First, it must be made clear that while the fur workers gained wage increases which make the week's earnings as much or more in five days as formerly in six; Ford, on the contrary, requires that production must first equal that of six days before wages become the same. Therefore, Ford has not given his workers what was won by the furriers, but only something that sounds like it.

Second, Ford had for six months already found it necessary to curtail production, which exceeded the possibility of the market. He experimented with the five-day week and found that, under conditions of mass production, this was the most profitable way to restrict production.

Third, Ford expects to again intensify production under the five-day plan, so that it will take care of any expansion in the market, or if the market remains stationary, the force can be reduced.

Fourth, while production has even been cheapened, Ford has "voluntarily" granted shorter hours than the A. F. of L. had previously demanded in its highly organized sections, and has thus taken away a powerful slogan from the unions in the attempts to organize the automobile workers.

Fifth, there is no doubt that Ford expects this measure to help eliminate the agitation of the Communists from his factories, where the shop paper, "The Ford Worker", has been circulating in editions of 10,000 to 19,000. Since the Communists led the Passaic textile workers into a nine-month strike, they are feared even where there is no union at all.

Finally, the sensitiveness of Ford to all threats of unionization and to the Communist agitation within his plants is a reflex of the new danger arising out of the mass production process, in which a disturbance in one part throws the entire machinery out of order. The smooth working of the Ford process requires the complete elimination of labor disturbance of every kind.

The material conditions for a shorter work-week have been created generally in America. And in spite of the miserable leadership of the trade unions the shortening of hours goes on. It is extremely symptomatic of how the process works that the five-day week should come in the manner above described—first, under the leadership of Communists, after bitter struggle with the employers; second, in non-union industry such as Ford, as a "concession" to prevent agitation and strikes; and only after these developments is the slogan taken up, in a

half-hearted manner, by the A. F. of L. leadership.

It is also important to note that, in the case of Ford the five-day week comes in a highly "rationalized" industry as (among other factors) a means of fighting the trade unions. In sharp contrast, in the garment trades a process of "de-rationalization" is going on, (breaking up of large shops into small ones, moving from big cities into small villages, etc.), in order to escape the powerful trade unions which are forcing the five-day week.

It is of interest to note the general movement of hours of labor in the past, as the background of the new developments.

When labor unions first began, the working day was 12 to 15 hours. One of the first strikes in America was that of ship builders in New York, 1806, for the 10-hour day. Only after 1840 did the ten-hour day become the standard, while 12 hours continued in many places (as in the steel industry) even down to 1923. In 1886-1890 the movement for an 8-hour day become general, and was established painfully, step by step, much as the five-day week is now entering industry. By 1909, only 8 per cent of the factory workers had a 48-hour week, while almost 85 per cent were working 54 hours or more per week.

The manufacturing census of 1923 shows, however, 46 per cent working 48 hours or less per week; 31 per cent worked 48 to 54 hours; while 23 per cent only worked more than 54 hours.

In a survey of 25 industries for the beginning of 1926 made by the National Industrial Conference Board, the average work-week was 49½ hours.

It is therefore clear that a long hard struggle is ahead of the American working class before the five-day, forty-hour week, becomes general. Even the 48 hour week is not fully established yet. In spite of the tremendous wealth and productiveness of American industry, the workers must labor longer hours in the United States than do the workers of "poverty stricken" and industrially undeveloped Soviet Russia.

What can be expected of the A. F. of L. in the way of active struggle for the five-day week?

Very little indeed! It is not merely a coincidence that when the fur workers were on strike for the five-day week and victory was in the balance, William Green, president of the A. F. of L., intervened in the strike over the heads of its leaders and attempted to negotiate a surrender. And now that the furriers' victory and Ford's move force Green's hand, the slogan of the five-day week is carefully fitted into the "new wage policy" and the whole class-collaborationist orientation. This is clearly understood by the capitalist press. The New York Times explains it thus:

"These new labor theories are an elaboration of the stand taken a year ago, when the A. F. of L. accepted joint responsibility for production and officially announced it was willing to co-operate with the employers for greater output in return for a share in the accrued profits."

But if the officialdom of the A. F. of L. has no desire or intention to struggle for the five-day week, the feeling among the masses is otherwise. It is symptomatic

how rapidly the victory of the furriers led to the strike and victory of the capmakers, and to the strike, still going on, of the cloakmakers, for the five-day week. The issue has stirred the masses. It will be pressed by the left wing under the leadership of the Communists and will rally mass support which will force the unions into struggle. The issue of the 40-hour week is destined to become a storm center in the American labor movement.

Towards Leninism

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cracy and taxes—and so the contradictions multiply. And a Leninist party will know how to utilize these growing contradictions, the opportunities they offer, the allies they provide and the divisions they create. That our party will prove equal to the grandeur of its tasks is already suggested by our skill in Passaic in using the petty bourgeoisie (small shop-keepers) against the textile barons and utilizing the differences within the big capitalist class by playing the low tariff democrats and progressive republicans against the high tariff textile barons (the bringing of Borah, Untermyer, Davis, Walsh, etc., into Passaic, the congressional investigation, the use of the capitalist press reporters and photographers, etc.).

It is true that our party is weak in numbers, limited in influence to certain sections of the country, ill-equipped with the necessary body of knowledge, young and inexperienced and poorly organized. It is true also that our class is so backward that "the elementary and fundamental task of the party is to accelerate the class formation of the American working class . . . (aid the working class) to break from the capitalist political parties" and organize a class industrially that is perhaps 85 per cent unorganized. It is true also that American capitalism is the most powerful in the world. But our party is offered a revolutionary method which is at once science and guide to action in Marxism-Leninism; a guide in the Communist International; an inspiration in the Soviet Union, and allies in all the internal and external victims of the oppression of American finance capital. Already, in the light of the little progress our party has made and in its increased sensitivity to specifically American problems and its increased practical activity in the unions among the unorganized workers, in connection with the Labor Party, in the beginnings of its attempts to find allies among the farmers, the non-proletarian Negroes, the colonial peoples, etc., we are justified in echoing the sober and yet confident judgment of Lenin after weighing the perspectives of the American labor movement and the difficulties facing it:

"The American workers will not follow the bourgeoisie. They will be with us for the civil war against the bourgeoisie. In this conviction I am supported by the entire history of the world and the American Labor movement."

This Lenin wrote in 1918. And if he had written in 1926 he would no doubt have added: "And by the development of the young Communist Party of America."