

political affairs

APRIL, 1976

Journal of Marxist Thought & Analysis

**THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE
1976 ELECTIONS**

Gus Hall

**SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE
LABOR SCENE**

D. Donati

**PAUL ROBESON: A GIANT
AMONG GIANTS**

Ted Bassett

**FORGE NEGRO-LABOR UNITY
FOR PEACE AND JOBS**

Paul Robeson

WHY WE HONOR JACK LONDON

Art Shields

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POLITICAL AFFAIRS is published monthly by Political Affairs Publishers, Inc., at 23 West 26 Street, New York, N. Y. 10010, to whom all orders, subscriptions, payments and correspondence should be addressed. Subscription rates: \$10.00 a year; \$5.00 for six months; for foreign, including Canada, \$11.00 a year. Single copies \$1.00. Second class postage paid at the Post Office in New York, N.Y.



1898-1976

GUS HALL

Address to the 25th CPSU Congress*

Comrade delegates and guests:

This 25th Congress of the Party of Lenin is another landmark, a guidepost on the revolutionary path of transition to socialism and to the fulfillment of human society's highest aspirations—a Communist society.

Like a piercing laser beam of light, the basic theme of Marxism-Leninism runs through the very sober, profound and deeply penetrating assessments and projections of Comrade Brezhnev's report.

Just as the building of socialism demonstrates, by the power of its example, the superiority of socialism, so the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, by the power of its example, by its unwavering adherence to, by its resourceful application of, and by the continuous development of the science of Marxism-Leninism, serves as the working pattern for the revolutionary movements throughout the world.

At a moment when the struggles of the historic revolutionary transitions have become increasingly more complex, and the ideological pressures build up, at a moment when new strains of the virus of opportunism are being hatched, this power of the Leninist example is of a special and great historic significance.

It serves as a working model because the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, throughout its 78 years, has always zealously guarded the workingclass heart, the revolutionary essence of Marxism-Leninism.

The concepts of proletarian internationalism and the class struggle have always been its guiding points of reference. With great skill and persistence the CPSU fights for peace, for detente and for the application of the policies of peaceful coexistence, but with the same persistence it rejects any and all opportunistic accommodations to imperialism.

The new proposals for peace in Comrade Brezhnev's report are a challenge to world capitalist leaders. Because the Communist Party

* The following address was made on March 1, 1976. *Political Affairs* will carry more materials on the CPSU Congress in future issues.—*The Editors.*

ADDRESS TO 25th CPSU CONGRESS

of the Soviet Union never permits consideration of momentary gains to erode the pillar of the class principles, it consistently finds the elements of unity between its national and international responsibilities.

It is a high tribute to the CPSU that your Congress has become the occasion for the assembly of one of the largest gathering of representatives of the world revolutionary movement.

While socialism continues along its steady course of growth and development, while its five-year plans are translated into economic, cultural and social wellbeing, while the overall quality of socialist life improves, in the capitalist world the general and the cyclical crises are translated into deeper poverty for greater numbers, into economic insecurity and a declining overall quality of life. Political repression and racism become United States capital's main line of defense.

While socialism reaches for new levels of achievement, monopoly-state capitalism develops new dimensions to its crises.

The new theme song of monopoly capital is "austerity." They are saying the people are living too high off the hog. There is a concentrated drive to cut down and to dismantle the social security programs which the working class and the people have won in earlier periods of capitalist development.

The drive for austerity goes hand in hand with the ever rising corporate profits. The cities in bankruptcy are but a reflection of this new dimension of the crisis of state-monopoly capitalism.

The daily comparison studies and the great mass awareness of the divergent paths followed by the two world socio-economic systems has emerged as a decisive factor in the political and ideological arenas of struggle.

Increasingly, socialism is viewed by the masses as the standard of achievement against which all social progress—or lack of it—is measured. It is this shift in the mass patterns of thought that explains the new hysterical note, the new low of falsehoods in bourgeois anti-socialist propaganda.

It explains the fishing with the baited silver lure, and the dredging for any and all anti-Communist, anti-Soviet or anti-socialist "droppings," especially if they have radical, left or Marxist coatings.

In our times, the main ideological pressures of imperialism are in relationship to the socialist world and against the Soviet Union in the first place.

Because capitalism increasingly comes out on the losing end in

the comparisons of the two systems, they have to resort to more intangibles, to political vapor bubbles that appear and disappear, leaving but an odor.

Opportunism breaks through where the ideological pressures of the enemy are the greatest.

Our Party has a basic principled position on these matters. We are not going to fight imperialism by their rules. We are not going to use or repeat anti-socialist and anti-Soviet slander to win acceptance, to win respectability or to prove our autonomy. We will not pattern our policies by accommodation to the attacks against our class, our Party or socialism.

Maoism is the classic example of where the path of opportunism leads, if it goes unchecked. At the murky bottom of the swamp of opportunism there is counterrevolution. Maoism has reached to that bottom.

The CIA-U.S. corporate and Maoist alliance in support of the fascist butchers in Chile is counterrevolution.

The Maoist-CIA and the racist South African conspiracy against the people and government of Angola is counterrevolution.

The Maoist vile slander campaign against world socialism is counterrevolutionary.

To be silent about these outrageous acts is to be neutral. To be neutral in such a basic struggle is itself an accommodation to opportunism.

There are problems and there are momentary setbacks, but by any yardstick the central fact, the hard core reality of this epoch, is the continuing victorious flow of the world revolutionary process and the growing power and the unity of forces that propel it.

So, dear comrades and delegates, accept our heartiest congratulations, our warm greetings and our best wishes for new and greater victories in your pioneering work in the building of Communist society.

May the staunch heroic workingclass heart beat strong and in rhythm the world over.

The Communist Party and the 1976 Elections*

This is one of those moments when it is necessary, more than usual, to keep in mind and to separate that which is short-termed and transient from the more basic and longer-range direction of currents in economic and political developments.

Without such a separation one can be diverted and spun around by the currents of the changing momentary events. For example, the economy is slowly moving out of the cyclical crisis, but serious long-range aftereffects remain. We must focus our attention on these aftereffects.

We are in the midst of the Presidential elections but the political lines are not yet clearly drawn. Much of the election rhetoric in the primaries is geared to win the votes of minor sectors who are not a reflection of the voters in general.

The capitalist world shows some signs of overcoming the economic crisis, but England, France, Italy, Spain, Japan are buffeted by a new wave of monetary instability. The inflationary storm continues in full force. The U.S. policies of support for detente continue, but under the pressures of the election campaign there is hesitation and retreat. Ford and Kissinger have retreated while leading senators are taking the lead in the struggle for detente.

The sentiment of support for new forms of political independence continues to grow but the swarming has so far not taken place.

In coming to conclusions, it is necessary to take into account both the short-term and the longer-range developments, but it is necessary to keep the two unmixed and to give each a balanced assessment.

How should we view this present moment, what should be our reactions to these events?

It has become a cliché, but the truth is that the moment is both a challenge and an unprecedented opportunity.

There are a number of ways we can view the period between now and November. We can decide that the 1976 election is a very important task. Or we can say that the election work must be inte-

* The following is a section of a report presented to a meeting of the National Council of the CPUSA held in New York on March 26, 1976.

grated into everything we do. Or we can say it is the most important of all of our tasks. Or we can decide that we will do what we have to between now and July and after the Republican and Democratic Party Conventions are over—and after we take our own summer vacations—then we will move into the election campaign with a full head of steam.

If any of the above is our approach to the election period, we can say now we will miss the mark by a mile. We will not meet the challenge or use the opportunity. The issues of the campaign are being discussed *now*. If we are to influence mass patterns of thought, we have to be in the campaign *now*.

If we are serious, if we really believe we can have an effect on the political scene, we will decide to make the elections the centerpiece of our work from now until November. We will relate all of our work to the elections.

If we are serious, then the next seven months will be a period of the most intense political mass work in our history, of propaganda and agitation on a scale without precedent, of circulation of the press in millions of copies, with breakthrough mass meetings, maximum use of radio and television, leaflets and pamphlets in the millions of copies and hundreds of street corner meetings.

Campaign committees are necessary, but if we are going to meet the challenge, then it means that the Communist Party, the State and District Committees, the officers of the clubs and every member of the Party is going to give this task the number one priority.

We must decide now. Any exceptions to this rule must be for good reason and by agreement.

Mass political work is hard practical work. If we fulfill our responsibilities, if we meet the challenge—come November we should all be many pounds lighter, but healthier and happier.

What are some of the overall characteristics, underpinnings and problems of this moment? The economy is sluggishly moving out of the economic crisis phase of the cycle. However, monopoly capital shows a continuing lack of confidence in its own system by holding back on commitments for capital expansion and a reluctance to expand on its inventories. They are apprehensive because of the deeper, long-range problems of capitalism.

The Ford Administration, while continuing its posturing against “big government spending,” behind the scenes has released a flood of economic pump priming, including funds from bills which he vetoed and Congress overrode.

Many of the features of the economic crisis were unique, and for

the same reasons that is true of the aftereffects. The aftereffects are influenced by and blend into the new stage of the general crisis of capitalism. They become a component of the general crisis. Unemployment is receding very slowly. Real unemployment hovers around the 10 per cent figure.

But even more important are the problems of the people in the areas and sectors of the economic deep freeze. As the overall pressures on economic questions ease up, the plight of the people in those areas become more critical and hopeless. The drive of monopoly capital for austerity will continue full steam after the elections are over. We should not be fooled by the temporary electoral lull.

Those in the economic deep freeze include large sections in the Black, Puerto Rican and Chicano communities. They include a large cross section of the young generation, but especially the millions of Black, Chicano and Puerto Rican youth, who are excommunicated from the work force at birth. The millions of retirees and the elderly are in the deep freeze. Millions of women workers are now excluded as leftovers of the crisis. To these must be added the hundreds of thousands of laid-off municipal workers. Cities like Newark and New York have 15 to 20 per cent unemployment.

The aftereffects of the crisis that will remain as part of the long-range quality of life are the closed child care centers, hospitals and colleges, the high taxes, high medical costs and rents, and inflation generally.

Big business propaganda is working to convince the people that the economic problems are all disappearing with the limited abatement of the crisis. We must not fall for this deception. The nature of some of the problems will change but the economic problems will not only remain, many of them will remain on a crisis level.

As the overall features of the crisis recede the capitalist establishment tends to abandon the victims trapped in the economic deep freeze. We must increase our efforts in the struggle to keep the welfare of those people on a front burner. This must come through in our election campaign.

To maintain the high rate of profit in the period of its decay and decline monopoly capital pushes for policies that will freeze real wages into a pattern of a continuing decline through inflation, attrition and speedup. A 5 per cent a year wage increase really means a decline in real wages. This will increasingly be a factor in the struggle between the forces of class collaboration and the forces of class struggle trade unionism. This must be articulated and expressed in concrete terms in our election campaign.

The elections have focused and brought to the surface a most significant split and a debate in the circles of U.S. monopoly capital. The issue that has emerged into the open is: how do you conduct a foreign policy when the balance of world forces are against you? It is clear this is the issue that will increasingly be the basic cause for divisions on foreign policy.

To expunge the word "detente" from the presidential vocabulary simply will not cover the split or end the debate. Kissinger asked, "How do you deal with an equal power?" The split is between those who believe the United States is forced to accept the new reality and deal with it, and those who think the U.S. can have a policy of "stonewalling." This debate will remain a major issue in the election campaign. It is an issue that will remain for this period of history. Like leeches, the ultra-Right, the racists, the jingoists, the Maoist sects, the Trotskyites and the JDL have attached themselves to this issue as a source for their sustenance.

This issue will remain with us. With each new victory against imperialism the debate will sharpen. It is a feature of the explosive transition to socialism. In a more immediate sense it is related to what Comrade Brezhnev said in his Report to the 25th Congress:

Consider as crucial the international task of completely eliminating all vestiges of the system of colonial oppression, infringement of the equality and independence of peoples and all seats of colonialism and racism.

U.S. imperialism has not taken kindly to such a perspective. The split and the debate sharpened when the people and the government of Angola crushed the forces of imperialist aggression. The struggle in Angola brought to the surface some *new* elements. The aggression against Angola was carried out by the scabbiest, the most discredited, and most wretched conglomeration in all of history. It was the fusion of imperialism, racism and opportunism. These are the poisonous counterrevolutionary fluids excreted by a dying and decaying socio-economic system. The odious alliance of U.S., British and French imperialism, South African racism and the Maoist opportunism cannot stop the revolutionary process in Africa. Therefore the debate and the division will sharpen when the racist regime in Rhodesia is forced to evacuate.

The nervousness of U.S. monopoly capital increases as the Communists in Italy, France, Spain, Portugal and Greece move closer to taking their places in the seats of power. The split will widen as the day of reckoning approaches for the fascist junta in Chile.

The debate over policies of detente cannot be separated from the issues in this debate. It is not a question of detente in the *abstract*. Rather it is one of detente in the context of a world moving against imperialism. We must fully enter this historic debate. We have a unique contribution to make. This is one of the issues on which we can mold the thoughts of millions.

Without us the debate stands on its head because both sides are on the capitalist side of the street. Both sides argue that the shift in the balance of forces is a defeat for the United States, a setback for the people of the United States. We must expose this dangerous new fraud. We must explain that a defeat for imperialism is not a defeat for the people. We must expose the fraud that detente has been a one-way street.

The people who make the charge never talk about concretes. The truth is that in the fields of trade, science, culture, technology—if anything, the flow is favorable for the United States. Some circles of monopoly capital are willing to bite off their noses of trade to spite their ideological faces.

In this debate we are on solid, winning ground.

The latest opinion polls clearly show that both Jackson and Reagan lost support because of their extreme positions on policies of detente and Ford gained because of his moderate position on these same questions.

This debate and division will not be limited to foreign policy. It will be the ideological sewer for reactionary demagoguery. Just as German fascism demagogically used the setbacks of German imperialism, reaction in the U.S. will demagogically use setbacks of U.S. imperialism. So we are dealing with a very basic issue of this period in U.S. history.

Therefore, even if we limit our electoral work to this debate, it would be reason enough for us to go all-out in this campaign. The campaign provides a great opportunity to expose this imperialist demagoguery.

But there are other issues. Monopoly capital's agit-prop machine is working overtime in a number of areas. The drive to make austerity acceptable "because there is no other alternative" is not limited to the period of economic crisis. It is related to the new stage of the general crisis. It is designed to make an overall cut in the standard of living acceptable, but it is directed in the first place against workers' wages, the unemployed and the poor. It has a sharp racist edge. The idea that most of the unemployed are out of work because they don't want to work has made some dangerous inroads.

The austerity drive hangs like a sword over the contract negotiations involving six million workers this year.

But this is also an issue on which we can win mass support. We must set this drive in the context of the huge corporate profits, the 120 billion dollar war budgets, the government gifts, subsidies and tax loopholes for the rich. This by itself also would be reason enough for us to give our best in the elections.

However, there are still other issues. We must take note of the fact that the insidious, seemingly low-key racism has spread. This has happened around the struggle for busing school children. The slogan of defending neighborhood schools is a convenient cover for racism.

Some of the opinion polls indicate that the idea that Blacks are getting too many concessions has gained some ground. These are insidious but dangerous developments. They set the stage for not-so-low-keyed racism.

But a caution is in order. This is also an area where we can make a great contribution, especially when we relate it to the need for unity in struggle.

Again, the struggle against racism would by itself be reason enough to accept the challenge of the elections as our central task.

But there are other issues. Reaction has made some headway in its phony campaign about "big government spending." This is a feature of the austerity drive. We must turn this into an argument against big government spending for big business and the big military. This phony campaign has made such headway that it has become a major inhibiting factor in Congress, even amongst the liberals, in the fight for social welfare programs.

The political fat cats, the bloated military brass, and the Corporate Government freeloaders, who pocket some 80 per cent of the big government spending, push the cry about big government spending. This would also be enough for a good election campaign by itself.

My purpose in these remarks has not been to write a platform. Rather, it has been to indicate some of the broad, critical areas in which we can make a unique contribution. They are the areas that present the challenge, but they also present the opportunity. It is also the basic argument why we must make the period from now to November a period of the most intensive mass work of our history.

Unless we create it, there is no contradiction between our electoral work and mass struggles. But we can create such contradiction by not relating the two. We can create a contradiction by relating the struggles to broad electoral movements, but also acting as if the

THE PARTY AND THE 1978 ELECTIONS

Communist campaign does not exist.

There are a number of pending mass actions on many levels that will test our ability to relate the elections to mass struggles. To begin with there are the wage contract negotiations of the six million workers. There is the April 3 action in Washington. There is a national convention of senior citizens organizations on June 2 in Chicago.

Then on a different level, there are plans for a broad mass action on July 4 in Washington, D.C., called by the People's Bicentennial Commission. As you know, we had some experience with it in Chicago during the Convention. What is important is that it seems to be moving in the direction of an anti-monopoly position with its Declaration of Economic Independence.

In general, the mood of those in the economic deep freeze is for militant action.

Other Parties and Candidates

Before going into our Party's campaign, let us take a brief look at the other parties and candidates who are also running.

In spite of the difficulties, including the proliferation of candidates and the demagogy, the voters are sending political signals.

It is clear the people are not buying the extreme Right-wing positions on either domestic or foreign questions. The cold-war posture and the anti-social welfare rhetoric has sunk Reagan's wagon. Jackson has been trying to shed his anti-detente, cold-war, Pentagon armor, but very few believe him. Wallace is sinking in his old racist boat. In this confused situation the peanut politician who speaks with a four-way forked tongue has made some headway. Part of Carter's vote has been an anti-Wallace vote.

The Harris and Udall campaigns again prove that it is very difficult to run a winning campaign in the two old parties as long as the machines are not with you. Udall and Harris again prove that genuine liberals are on foreign soil in the two old parties.

Harris' campaign proves that he who speaks against the power of the monopolies is quickly labeled an extremist and isolated from the Democratic Party machine. The two old parties simply are not vehicles for honest liberals or progressives because they are vehicles of the monopolies.

It begins to appear more and more that it is possible for the Democratic Party to open its Convention without choosing a first-ballot Presidential candidate. They may have 10 candidates for the Vice-Presidency but no Presidential candidate. This is, of course, what Humphrey the slippery eel from Minnesota is waiting for.

The big question obviously is: with such poor pickings in the two-party orbit, what are the prospects for the growing sector of independent voters, the real liberals, the progressives and the broad Left?

There is movement in many sectors. They all reflect this growing sense that a new political movement, a new electoral vehicle is necessary. They are probing in the right direction. We will make a contribution if we work to raise the sights of these movements to where they can become integrated into a new broad people's political movement based on the coalition of the working class with the Black, Chicano and Puerto Rican communities, a movement that will sustain a new political party. There is a growing section of the voters and non-voters who will not respond to anything less.

At this point, it does not appear that such a development is in the cards for the 1976 elections. But we must not give it up, because this does not mean the avenue of political independence is dead or closed.

This is a moment when it is possible to build such coalitions in states, cities, wards and especially in Congressional and legislative districts. I think we should make this a mandatory feature of our mass work.

Also it seems to me that we have to reject the concept that it is possible to build a viable electoral coalition that does not rest on an organized local structure. This is not a moment when there will be spontaneous mass support for such top coalitions. Further, it is easier to build such alliances on a local basis.

The moment calls for a basic reversal of direction. But the two old parties and the liberal progressive movement have not produced a leadership that would boldly call for such a reversal.

Here is a vacuum which a flood of political mediocrity and less seeks to fill.

Now let us consider the campaign around the Communist candidates. From what I have said, it is obvious we can fully meet the challenge and the opportunity only by getting into the fray with a campaign around Communist candidates.

But it is also obvious that we still suffer from some liquidationist hangups. So far we have not met the challenge. This weakness appears in many ways. Some see the elections as a Tyner-Hall campaign—not as a Communist Party campaign.

There are still some comrades who are for the Communist Party naming candidates—but only until something "better," something "broader" comes along. Some are wistfully watching the papers for something better. At the slightest movement towards political inde-

pendence some comrades wish to raise questions of whether we ought to consider not running.

Let us place the question on the table and see if we agree. We are going to stay in the electoral arena, with Communist candidates at all times. We are not going to withdraw into a position of only supporting other candidates under any circumstances. In one way or another, whether separately or as partners in alliances, Communist candidates are a necessary and indispensable feature of the electoral scene. The question is not whether, *but how* we can run Communist candidates. We must never revert back to the days of opportunistic abdication from electoral struggle.

Some comrades have difficulties because they see the Communist campaign too narrowly. They are victims of their own sectarianism.

From what I said earlier about the issues and the forces it seems clear that our program and candidates can become a realistic and meaningful alternative for a broad spectrum of the electorate.

We have to aim our campaign to the millions who are disillusioned and are alienated from the two old parties. We have to present a meaningful alternative to the millions who have withdrawn, as a protest or because of a sense of hopelessness about the electoral process. We have to talk to the shop workers on the issues that disturb them. We have to appeal to the millions of youth who are treated as castoffs from society. We can make a mark in the struggle against racism.

We are unique. We present a unique alternative because of our class approach. We will get a broad hearing when we call for a reversal of the present course.

Our literature, our committees should reflect this broad base.

But we cannot be satisfied with good propaganda, agitation and education. We must also seriously go out for votes. It is generally important to have votes, but there is a deeper reason. To vote for Communist candidates is an act based on a deeper political consciousness. To get a bigger vote we are forced to work to develop that deeper consciousness. We must go out and convince people that it is the most meaningful vote they can cast. We can do just that if we ourselves are so convinced.

We have to go into the question of how the ruling class views a Communist vote. The ruling class makes concession where the mass pressures are felt. A big Communist vote in Detroit would become a serious concern for GM, Ford and the government in how they deal with auto workers.

We can point to the hundreds of millions of dollars the United

States spends in France, Italy, Spain and Portugal in its attempt to overcome the votes for Communist candidates. These are the votes with the biggest political clout.

We must put forth slogans like:

"A vote for more of the same is a wasted vote."

"If you want the establishment to take notice—vote Communist."

"Would you vote for your boss to be a shop steward? Then why vote for his candidate for public office?"

"Would you elect your landlord to rent control board? Then why vote for his candidate for public office?"

"Would you elect a banker to supervise welfare programs? Then why elect his candidates to public office?"

So besides the broadest propaganda and agitation, we must conduct a campaign to build a Communist electoral constituency. It is a campaign to develop a class consciousness.

The first practical task that we face is to get the Party on the ballot in as many states as is possible. The comrades from Ohio, Michigan and some other states will give us the benefit of their experience—but it is already clear that we face some new problems. Besides the problem of fear, there are increasing numbers who do not sign our petitions because they have withdrawn from the electoral arena in disgust.

But by far the biggest obstacle is in the Party. One has to take into consideration the unusually bad weather and the flu, but I don't think that explains the sluggishness. The basic problem is that we have not politically convinced the Party. The root of the weakness is in the leading cadre.

It is simply unbelievable how our cadre is tied to an inner bureaucratic existence. Leading comrades not only lead such a life—but insist on having around them a core who do likewise. We must change our style of work. It must become the political responsibility of every leading comrade no matter what the assignment is—to fight for, to organize your work in such a manner that a part of your time each week is devoted to practical political work—the kind of work where you come in direct contact with people, with workers.

With such an approach the Party can make itself really felt in the election campaign and can greatly advance its strength and influence.

Some Observations on the Labor Scene

During 1976, several labor contracts in major industries are scheduled for renewal.

In their preparatory stage, these tri-annual negotiations take place in an atmosphere of militancy. The workers demand and their union leaders pledge that the losses the workers suffered in buying power under the expiring contract will be made good. Conveniently forgotten are the claims made by the union negotiators when they sold the old contracts to the membership, that these were the finest contracts ever negotiated in the history of their industries. The ritual by which unions prepare for negotiations with the professional teams representing the monopolies that dominate industry hasn't varied much over the years. Wages are deemphasized because that's supposedly taken care of by a wage formula. This is usually done by diverting the attention of the members to some fringe benefit whose bargaining value is escalated far beyond its actual worth, or by making a front loading wage adjustment (with a larger increase in the first year of the new agreement) that leaves the formula intact.

Since 1950, the workers have been propagandized and mobilized to fight in this manner for peripheral issues, such as the UAW demand for a "Guaranteed Annual Wage," which ended up as "Supplementary Unemployment Benefits" paid for by the workers out of their economic package. Early in the current recession, the unreliability of SUB became obvious, as the funds were exhausted by the heavy layoffs. The union in the upcoming negotiations is proposing an increased contribution to the SUB funds. The UAW would greatly enhance its prestige among its members and throughout the labor movement if it fought for a federally funded SUB program that covered all workers for the duration of their unemployment. A similar fate has befallen other "grandiose" schemes, such as the "30 and Out" pension plan of the UAW and the sabbatical vacation plan of steel. Instead of the latter plan, it would have done more steel workers more good, and would have cost the companies more, if all workers had received an additional week of vacation.

The wage formula in such basic industries as steel, auto, rubber, and coal mining consists, with minor variations, of a 3 per cent

wage increase, based on productivity, and a cost-of-living formula that calls for quarterly adjustments. This is, incidentally, the same formula that was used in 1971 and 1972 in President Nixon's wage controls, except for the cap of 2.5 per cent on the cost of living. The formula is a rip-off that has led to lower living standards for U.S. workers. Productivity has been rising considerably more than 3 per cent annually. To keep the reported figures down, productivity is measured as a national average and it includes all non-productive workers, including all white collar workers. It sweeps under the rug a key issue of our times and the crux of the current economic crisis: When "labor-saving" technological innovations, automation and cybernation are introduced, what happens to the labor that is "saved"?

With productivity raises pegged at 3 per cent, when union officials join with industry leaders to call for increased productivity, for little or no additional wages, the increases over 3 per cent are retained exclusively by the company, which thus maximizes its profits at the expense of the low seniority workers who are "rewarded" with lay-offs.

The best cost-of-living formula does not fully compensate for the rise in the cost of living. By changing the market basket on which the cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) is based, as was done during the Nixon Administration, adjustments are adversely affected. The formula is, therefore, subject to manipulation. Furthermore, the COLA is based on price changes that took place several months prior to the adjustment.

Assuming a \$5.00 per hour wage average, a 3 per cent productivity raise is 15 cents. An 8 per cent COLA adjustment in equal installments of 2 per cent each quarter means a 10 cent COLA adjustment each three months. At the end of the year, the total increase is 55 cents, for a year end wage of \$5.55. In a full year of 2,080 hours the worker under the formula receives \$831.90 total increase in annual wages. A wage increase of 55 cents per hour at the beginning of the contract year produces \$1,144 dollars, a difference of \$312.10 for the year. By making COLA adjustments retroactive lump-sum payouts quarterly, \$208 of this would return to the workers.

With general acceptance of the wage formula, the demands of the workers are focused on secondary issues. In this situation, even when the membership repudiates the acceptance recommendation of the leadership, they are not challenging the wage formula. The ensuing strike may well reflect discontent in the ranks but, however important, the issues involved are secondary.

It wasn't recognized at the time, nor is it generally understood

today, that SUB, COLA and the private plans which were widely hailed in the mass media as significant breakthroughs by labor were in fact major set-backs.

The strength of the old CIO came from the broad support and good will it enjoyed from the millions of unorganized workers and the people generally beyond the labor movement. The programs of the CIO went much farther than the narrow interests of its members. They promoted the general welfare of the people. Every struggle that defended and advanced the interests of the people was reciprocated by support from the CIO. At the time, the CIO campaigned for an all inclusive social security program that would provide protection for all from the cradle to the grave. In the process, the CIO became the champion of the people. Unfortunately, this unity of purpose was effectively destroyed under a massive screen of red-baiting.

The major union contracts used to be renewed each year. In 1946, the CIO, responding to the needs of workers who were suffering from the wage controls of World War II, demanded a 2 dollar a day wage increase. Since employer opposition was expected, the CIO leaders decided to prepare for strikes in all industries.

The steel workers were to shut down the industry on the first Monday after April 1. The auto workers would follow on Tuesday, the electrical workers on Wednesday, with the rest of the industries to follow on Thursday and Friday. The CIO was on a collision course with the great monopolies that dominated the U.S. economy.

Long before the day of impact, Walter Reuther broke ranks. He jumped the gun by striking General Motors in November of 1945. The auto industry was in the process of reconverting from war to peacetime production. Heavy lay-offs would have been necessary because of the extensive changes. No autos were being produced and the public was clamoring for cars. By waiting until the reconversion was completed, the bargaining position of the UAW would have been greater than it had ever been. Concerted action would have paid off handsomely for all workers.

The Reuther maneuver shunted basic auto out of the confrontation. When the time came, UE shut down General Electric and Westinghouse from coast to coast. Phil Murray, then president of the CIO and SWOC (Steelworkers Organizing Committee), having failed to work out an acceptable settlement, struck steel the following week. A number of other unions struck in the ensuing weeks. 1946 remains the high point of strike activity in U.S. labor history. Despite the dissension, the 18.5 cent per hour increase (about 18 per cent

of the hourly wage) also remains percentagewise the largest increase ever won by U.S. workers.

SUB was a sop thrown to the UAW and steelworkers to divide union ranks and take them out of the fight for a federally funded and administered unemployment compensation program. Other than adjustments to partially offset inflation, there has been no basic improvement in the state unemployment compensation laws.

In 1949 Phillip Murray negotiated the first industry-wide private pension plan with the steel industry. He used this "great victory" to cover up his expulsion of 11 national and international unions with over one million members from the CIO. The plan called for a \$100 a month pension including Social Security after 30 years of service upon reaching age 65.

The split effectively ended the CIO organizing drives and weakened the bargaining position of the constituent unions. The legislative struggle to advance programs that protected and promoted the welfare of the people was abandoned. The "cradle to the grave" concept died in the cradle. Understandably, the CIO lost the support of the people.

In 1950, less than a year after the CIO split, Reuther signed his "broken leg" contract with General Motors. This was a five year agreement that included for the first time the 3 per cent productivity plus COLA wage formula. Reuther at the time was widely hailed as the "Man With a Plan"—usually some gimmick conceived by corporate interests that he unabashedly claimed as his own.

The 1950 agreement was called the "broken leg" contract by John L. Lewis because the idea was first conceived by Charles "Engine" Wilson, then chairman of the board at GM, at a time when he was recovering from a broken leg. It was sold to the auto workers as the greatest achievement in labor's long and arduous quest for economic justice. It had additional virtues for Reuther. It assured peace if not progress for five years. There would be no negotiations and no strikes in the basic auto industry throughout this period. It enabled Reuther to consolidate his control of the union by cleaning out the Left and to deploy his otherwise idle staff to raid the Farm Equipment and United Electrical Workers' unions.

Imperial U.S. was about to launch its intervention in Korea. Joe McCarthy had not yet become the loathsome menace. Democratic Party Senators Humphrey of Minnesota and Paul Douglas of Illinois were engaged in the process of making red-baiting respectable. By the amendment process the Wagner Act, which protected the workers' right to organize, was gutted by Congress. Renamed the Taft-Hartley law, it now protected the employers. A new clause, Section

9H, required every local and national union official to sign a notarized affidavit each year that he was not a member of the Communist Party nor a Communist. The penalty for falsification was 5 years in a federal prison and \$10,000 fine.

A motley coalition of the government, the courts, the House Un-American Activities Committee, corporate interests, the top bureaucracy of labor, the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, the FBI, the politicians of both major parties and the mass media launched a concerted, massive, sustained red-baiting witch hunt such as our country had never seen before nor since. Communists, militants, and progressive workers were driven from their jobs by the thousands.

The U.S. working class didn't stop fighting and become corrupted by middle-class incomes and outlook, as has been alleged by pseudo historians. It was robbed of its leadership, the class content of its organizations gutted and betrayed. The curtain fell on the most effective trade union movement the nation has ever known.

Despite the loss of leadership and tactical positions, U.S. rank-and-file trade unionists deserve some appreciation for their untiring struggles to preserve their unions, to keep alive the undying embers of class struggle and to patiently await their turn at bat.

Today the labor and social laws of the U.S. are the most costly and least effective of the industrially developed nations of the world. This is generally conceded. In its defense, however, the U.S. trade union top bureaucracy boasts of the high wages they have won.

An examination of the trends in wages in the major capitalist countries is therefore in order. Except for the percentages, the figures below are from the December 1975 *Monthly Bulletin of Statistics* published by the United Nations.

GENERAL HOURLY WAGE RATES—MALE AND FEMALE			
Country	1968	1974	Per Cent Change
France (francs)	3.79	8.39	121
F.R. Germany (marks)	4.79	8.94	87
Italy (lira)	445	1213	178
Japan (yen)	52.7	146.5	178
England (pence)	86.2	168.9	96
U.S.A. (dollars)	3.01	4.40	46
WHOLESALE PRICE INDEX 1970=100			
France	80.5	137.5	71
F.R. Germany	93.6	129.4	38
Italy	90.3	177.2	96
Japan	94.4	152.2	61
England	91.5	215.2	135
U.S.A.	92.8	145.9	57

The figures show that wages in the U.S. lagged behind prices, whereas wages in France, West Germany, Italy and Japan rose considerably more than prices. This means that the trade unions of Western Europe and Japan are more effectively protecting the wages and living standards of their members against the ravages of inflation.

Wages in the U.S. have not only failed to keep up with labor in the other capitalist countries, but have also fallen behind prices. U.S. workers' living standards have been declining for 11 years. This is the heavy burden the U.S. workers must bear as a consequence of a class-collaborationist top labor bureaucracy and red-baiting.

In Japan and Western Europe, negotiations on wages and fringes are conducted annually on a national basis with all the unions involved, while in the U.S. negotiations in each industry take place separately and at different times. Each union acting on its own is a poor substitute for unity of action and purpose of all unions.

Furthermore, the workers in other capitalist countries have their own political parties. Within the framework of the capitalist system they more effectively conduct simultaneous struggles on both the economic and political fronts. In the U.S., the top trade union bureaucracy continues to support politicians of the parties of the monopolies. Consequently, they are even less effective politically than economically.

It is not the intention of the author to deal comprehensively here with the conditions of the workers in the socialist countries. However, a few words may be appropriate at this point. The workers in the socialist countries still earn less than the workers in the most advanced capitalist countries. However, they are rapidly catching up. They enjoy the most advanced social conditions in the world. Their jobs are secure, prices are stable and real wages are rising 3-5 per cent each year. Their economies are expanding to fulfill their needs. Because the capitalist system has been abolished, there are no rich, but no poor either. The rich cultural life they are developing assures them of a higher quality of life.

The purpose of this brief review is not to recall the "good old days," nor is it to damn the top trade union bureaucracy. They are able men. Their problem is they have no confidence in the working class. They believe in capitalism, even those with so-called socialist backgrounds. They are beneficiaries of the status quo. They enjoy salaries and perquisites commensurate with the captains of industry. Therefore, they use their talents to promote and support the capitalist system that has done so much for them personally. Fortunately for the working class, most of these men are old, tired and out of

touch with reality. Time and history are jet propelling them and their policies into oblivion. The objective is to understand how we got where we are; where, if anywhere, we are going in the current round of negotiations; and the direction in which time, events and the demands of the membership are moving the trade unions.

The composition of the unions is changing. A number of highly skilled worker groups are being automated out of existence. Pattern makers, model makers, tool makers and typesetters, to name a few, are going the way of the blacksmith. A larger proportion of blue collar workers are Black or of other national minorities or women, which means a higher ratio of the membership is made up of the most exploited elements of our society.

The remnants of the trade union leadership identified with the great growth of unionism in the 1930s and 1940s are having their last fling at contract negotiations. To a considerable degree, therefore, this round of negotiations will take place within the framework of the patterns already established. To compensate for the high rate of inflation in the past three years, the nominal money packages will be the highest ever. However, they are not likely to reverse the 11 year downward trend in real wages. There may be some exceptions above the norm, but the overall average will remain in a well worn rut.

Because the nominal increases will be high, the mass media will cluck their collective tongue and revive the canard that "big labor," with its insatiable demands, is adding fuel to inflation. This is a cruel hoax on the union memberships. Less than 8.6 per cent of the retail price of an automobile goes to direct labor costs. Auto workers get about \$430 in wages from a \$5,000 car. In 1974, for every dollar paid out in wages, \$3.35 was created in added value.

There will be strikes, because many employers will miscalculate the mood of the workers. They will try to take advantage of the mass unemployment, which tends to weaken the unions. They will offer less than the workers have a right to expect. If they don't back down, the workers will have no alternative but to strike.

The yardstick by which these negotiations should be measured is what the unions do or try very hard to do about alleviating mass unemployment. This is no simple matter of passing a resolution and filing it for future historians. This requires the full mobilization of the membership for an economic assault on the companies and a political campaign for congressional passage of compatible legislation for the shorter work week with no reduction in take home pay. However, let us not underestimate the ability of some union leaders

to come up with gimmicks that will defuse even this demand temporarily.

No issue has played a greater role in the history of the U.S. trade union movement than the struggle for the shorter work day and work week. Many unions, including the AFL-CIO, have adopted resolutions favoring it. But nothing has been done to make this the concerted goal of the trade union movement. To wait for Meany and like minded officials to act is to wait forever in vain. This is the task of the local unions and the rank and file.

When several thousand local unions pass resolutions supporting the shorter work week and by so doing influence a dozen or more major international unions to make this their key demand, a qualitatively new political situation will have developed in the labor movement and in the nation.

Some of the younger leaders, with their eyes on the top trade union positions about to be vacated, with more vision and vigor, will recognize the full potential of this movement. They will rally the membership around this issue. To their surprise, they will find their communities and the nation responding favorably, for this is an issue that transcends the narrow interests of the trade unions. It promotes the general welfare. It will put unemployed America back to work. It will get the trade unions moving again on a host of economic and political issues that have been gathering dust for a quarter of a century.

Perhaps this is the place to clear up a widespread misconception. There is no eight hour day in the U.S. There are, however, laws and labor contracts that call for premium overtime pay after eight hours a day and forty hours a week. Widely hailed contracts for the 5 and 6 hour day, in fact, only establish a lower threshold for paying overtime. Unless the contract specifically prohibits overtime or gives the workers the option not to work overtime, the companies can compel the workers to put in longer hours or be subjected to discipline, including discharge, if they refuse to do so.

Labor's political helplessness while it is tied to the Democratic Party is pointed up by the failure of an overwhelming Democratic Congress to enact any meaningful labor and social legislation. The Democrats are never so good as when they are out of office. Once in, they resent being reminded of their campaign promises. Meany is guilty of playing this game too. He called for a veto proof Congress, then ran from it in fear he would get it. It is naive to assume that the trade union bureaucracy that collaborates with the bosses on economic issues will fight them on political issues. A collaborator

collaborates across the board.

Meany jealously guards his "right" to speak for labor. As long as everyone else remains silent, he is labor's spokesman. Meany is never so outspokenly truculent as when he retreats. When the wage controls were announced by President Nixon, Meany blasted them from Hell to breakfast. Under this smokescreen of "militancy" he backed into membership on the Control Board. After the Board established the rules that put a straitjacket on labor, Meany resigned with another phony blast of militancy. Typical of the Meany political trade-off is his support for the passage of the \$6 billion act to provide jobs for 600,000 civilian workers while quietly withdrawing the demand to extend unemployment compensation an additional 13 weeks.

The only decent thing that Meany has ever done is to give conditional support to the farm workers. The big transnational corporations that dominate the economic and political life of the nation have only peripheral interests in agriculture. Occasionally Meany will help raise financial support for a strike. These narrow but important trade union actions are the means by which he launders his reputation. It makes him look real and clean.

No person has done more to undermine international trade union solidarity than George Meany. He has pulled the AFL-CIO out of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions because the ICFTU—dominated by social democrats—is too "Left" for Meany. Some of its constituent unions had the temerity to strike U.S. based transnational corporations. More recently he withdrew the AFL-CIO from the International Labor Organization, a tripartite organization of government, industry and labor. The ILO, once a part of the old League of Nations, is now a specialized agency of the United Nations. For years the ILO was a place where some of the "elder statesmen" of labor could sleep unnoticed and undisturbed. But as the world changed, so did the ILO. It became a force against the TNC's and for labor, hence Meany's antipathy.

There is a burning need for trade union unity at the local, national and international levels in support of action to protect and promote the interests of the workers. But Meany, who has led no fight against the TNC's at home, is obviously not fighting them abroad. He, therefore, sees no need for trade union unity here or there. In his fear of Communism, he has immured the U.S. labor movement to the point of almost total isolation from its friends and natural allies in the world trade union movement. He supports armaments production, opposes detente and obstructs trade with the

Soviet Union. That such trade could generate hundreds of thousands of jobs doesn't faze him in the least. He, after all, has a lifetime job.

That the top bureaucrats of the trade unions are collaborators with capitalism is not an "invention" of the Left. It has been the subject of many books and articles. Only recently (February 3, 1976) Abe Raskin, in the Op-Ed page of the *New York Times*, had this to say: "The principal instrument of collaboration was the President's Labor Management Committee, a summit organization, in which George Meany and seven other ranking unionists sit alongside the heads of General Motors, General Electric, U.S. Steel, Alcoa, Mobil Oil, The First National City Bank, the Bechtel Group and Sears Roebuck."

He went on to say, "The committee became a casualty of labor's realpolitik in the battle over the picketing bill and the larger political battles of a Presidential year. But the frequency with which corporate magnates and union chiefs makes common cause in Congress these days on import curbs and on stretchout of environmental time limits indicates that the idea of a shadow economic cabinet is not dead."

The tasks confronting the trade union movement, while formidable, are not insurmountable. But there can be no meaningful breakthrough on matters of basic interest to the working class until there is a change in the character of the trade unions and their leadership. These changes are inevitable. The quality of the changes will be determined by the understanding and actions of the rank and file. As these changes take place, the character of the labor movement's policies will undergo a transformation from class collaboration to class struggle.

The workers are learning that the character of the system has changed from free enterprise to state monopoly capitalism, whose increasingly unstable economy, in its drive for profits, is the main source of the regressive policies that are lowering their living standards and impairing the quality of their lives. Their response is becoming increasingly political. From extra-parliamentary demonstrations and mass lobbying they will progress to regional and then to general political strikes, both national and international. Broad political action will inevitably lead to the formation of a new political party representative of all the progressive anti-monopoly forces in our society. A broad political coalition based on labor, including the popular movements for Black liberation, women's equality, peace, environmental protection, for the interests of the

intellectuals and youth is now groping toward the initial prerequisites for a common denominator on issues, program of action and organizational structure.

Countervailing forces are beginning to confront the transnational corporations. Though they operate here and abroad with the support and blessing of the top bureaucracy of the AFL-CIO, not all is well in their domain. Too often, the AFL-CIO-nominated labor attaches strategically placed in U.S. embassies around the world are CIA agents. They pay off and bribe foreign trade union leaders to betray their trust. Recent exposures have weakened this network.

Today, there is more world-wide trade union unity and action than ever. The building of international trade union unity at a higher level of class consciousness is on the agenda for discussion and action in the mines, mills, workshops, transports and offices of the world. The hammer blows pounding the TNC's around the planet are mere pin pricks compared with what lies ahead.

CORRECTION

The subscription price of the African Communist was incorrectly given in our February issue. The annual subscription price is now \$4.00 for surface mail and \$10.00 for air mail.

Checks should be sent to Imported Publications, 320 W. Ohio, Chicago, Illinois 60610.

Paul Robeson: A Giant Among Giants*

The life and struggles of the late Paul Robeson, towering giant among giants and preeminent citizen of the U.S. and the world, has left an indelible mark on the cause of progressive humankind.

Best son of the Black people and unbending champion of the freedom of the peoples, Robeson unstintingly outpoured his superb artistry in singing and acting and his revolutionary humanism to his fellow beings across America and across the world in the cause of the equality of the peoples, human dignity and peace.

Under the impact of the freedom spirit instilled by his father, the Rev. W. D. Robeson, an escaped slave, and the stern discipline he imposed, young Paul was imbued with a deep hatred of the national and racial oppression of his people and an unquenchable desire for their complete freedom.

In the course of this struggle Robeson discovered the indissoluble link between the freedom struggle of Black Americans and the revolutionary proletarian struggle for socialism and the national liberation movement of the people against imperialism. Thus he rose to the heights of proletarian internationalism.

Central to the shaping of the proletarian revolutionary thought and practice of Robeson were the achievements of the Soviet Union in uprooting Great Russian chauvinism, eliminating national and racial enmity between the numerous nations, nationalities and peoples formerly oppressed by Czarism and in carrying out in practice the Leninist theory of the non-capitalist path of development for nations freed from the clutches of imperialism.

Robeson was greatly influenced by the political developments that were taking place during his stay in Europe (1927-1939). In London, he came to know Kwame Nkrumah, of the Gold Coast-Ghana; Nnamdi Azikiwe, of Nigeria; Nehru, of India, and other anti-imperialist fighters.

Tracing the path he trod to discovery of the Soviet Union via the discovery of Africa and the decisive influence of the experiences of the Soviet Union on the evolution of his political views, Robeson in his short but celebrated work *Here I Stand* observes:

* The matchless artist and people's champion Paul Robeson died on January 23, 1976. *Political Affairs* takes this occasion of the month of his birth to pay tribute to Robeson, whose passing is mourned by tens of millions on all continents. *The Editors.*

London was the center of the British Empire and there I "discovered" Africa . . . I came to consider that I was an African . . .

It was an African who directed my interest in Africa to something he had observed in the Soviet Union. On a visit to that country he had traveled east and had seen the Yakuts, a people who had been classed as a "backward race" by the Czars. He had been struck by the resemblance between the tribal life of the Yakuts and his own people of East Africa . . .

Well, I went to see for myself and on my first visit to the Soviet Union in 1934 I saw how the Yakuts and the Uzbeks and all the other formerly oppressed nations were leaping ahead from tribalism to modern industrial economy, from illiteracy to the heights of knowledge. Their ancient cultures blooming in new and greater richness. Their young men and women mastering the sciences and arts. A thousand years? No. Less than twenty! . . .

I came to believe that the experiences of the many peoples and races in the Soviet Union—a vast country which embraces one sixth of the earth's surface—would be of great value for other peoples of the East in catching up with the modern world.

The name of Mount Robeson was given by the Soviets to the highest peak in the Ala-Tau mountain range, situated in the Kirghiz Soviet Socialist Republic in Central Asia.

Robeson began to see the need more than ever for a truly just society in which racism and economic justice would be eliminated.

He saw murderous Hitler fascism come to power. He saw Mussolini's fascist hordes rape Ethiopia. He saw Hitler's and Mussolini's hordes join Franco to overthrow the Spanish Republic.

On his many concert tours in Europe, Asia and the U.S. he became aware of the urgent need for unity of all anti-fascist forces. Thus he became an early antifascist.

At a London rally in support of the Spanish Republic in the late 1930's, Robeson observed:

Every artist, every scientist, must decide *NOW* (Robeson's emphasis) where he stands. He has no alternative.

There is no standing above the conflict on Olympian heights. There are no impartial observers. Through the destruction, in certain countries, of the greatest of man's literary heritage, through the propagation of false ideas of racial and national superiority, the artist, the scientist, the writer is challenged.

He sang for the Jewish refugees fleeing Hitler.

He went to Spain to join some 3,200 members of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade of volunteers, and sang songs that lifted the Brigade's fighting spirit.

Robeson identified closely with the workers of Britain, the miners, the dockyard workers, the shipyard workers and other sections of the working people. He up-lifted their spirit of struggle with his songs. He joined their picket lines.

As a true internationalist, he studied the art of the peoples of many countries. He sought out the class content of the art of these countries and sang the songs which fired the will for freedom of the working masses and the oppressed peoples. He became fluent in more than two dozen languages and dialects including Chinese and Swahili.

He carried on the freedom traditions of Nat Turner, Denmark Vesey, Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Dr. W.E.B. DuBois, James W. Ford, Benjamin Davis and other Black revolutionaries and true democrats too numerous to mention here. He linked his art to the liberation of the Black people and of all humankind. He sang and elevated the Black spirituals, which he understood as expressions of the unquenchable freedom aspirations of a kidnaped and enslaved people.

Robeson was born on April 9, 1898, in Princeton, N.J., the youngest of five children of the Rev. William D. Robeson (a former slave) and Marie Louisa Robeson, who died of burns in a household accident when Paul was six.

Robeson was richly endowed with talent in many arenas. He won a highly competitive state scholarship to Rutgers in 1915. He won a Phi Beta Kappa key in his junior year and membership in Cap and Skull, the honor society, in his senior year. He then went to Columbia where he graduated in law in 1923. He was the recipient of eight honorary degrees: M. A. Rutgers, 1932; Doctor of Humane Letters, Rutgers, 1932, Hamilton College, 1940, and Morehouse College, 1943; Honorary Degree, Washington University; Honorary Degree and Professor of Music, Moscow State Conservatory.

As an outstanding athlete, Robeson won 12 letters in sports at Rutgers: in football, baseball, basketball, track, and in discus, shot-put and javelin. He was twice chosen by Walter Camp for the All America team. Camp termed Robeson the "greatest defensive end that ever trod the gridiron."

Early in the 1920's, Robeson won fame as actor and singer. He made his debut in "Simon the Cyrenian" in Harlem in 1921, the first of many stage triumphs. In April 1925, he and his associate, Lawrence Brown, gave the first all-Black recital of Black spirituals at the Greenwich Village Theater.

In 1927, Robeson went to London, where he resided until 1939. In 1928 in London as Jo in "Showboat," he immortalized Ole Man River. Then came his lead role in Shakespeare's "Othello" in London

in 1931, in the U.S. 1943-45 and again in London 1959, which helped to rocket Robeson to world theatrical fame. In 1939 his rendition of "Ballads for Americans" on CBS radio made the song nationally famous. Robeson made 11 movies between 1933 and 1942. His recording of spirituals and folk songs ran into millions in many countries.

Awards received by Robeson included the Spingarn Medal in 1945, the Soviet Peace Prize in 1953; and many others.

Explaining in his autobiography, *Here I Stand*, why he went to London, Robeson said:

Having begun my career as a concert singer and actor in the United States, I first went abroad, like many other Negro performers, to work at my profession. If today (1958) the opportunities for Negro artists are still very limited it was many times worse 30 years ago.

After several trips back and forth, I decided to stay in Europe and to make my home in London. My reasons were quite the same as those which over the years have brought millions of Negroes out of the Deep South to settle in other parts of the country.

As Robeson's career unfolded, his deep resentment of Black oppression led him early to oppose racist, stereotyped portrayals of Blacks on the stage and screen.

"So I made a decision," he wrote. "If the Hollywood and Broadway producers did not choose to offer me worthy roles to play, then I would choose not to accept any other kind of offer."

His strong voice ringing out for freedom is still echoing throughout the world. In face of persecution by the white monopolist ruling class of our country, Robeson in a 1938 broadcast declared: "The artist must elect to fight for freedom or slavery, I have made my choice. I had no alternative."

At an open-air concert in 1949 in Peekskill, N.Y., Robeson was attacked by a lynch mob. He was saved by the alertness of a cordon of Black and white workers. He was a victim of both racism and anti-Communist hysteria. His struggles on behalf of Black freedom and human dignity aroused the bitter hatred of white supremacists and McCarthyites.

As early as May 1924, on the opening night of Eugene O'Neill's "All God's Chillun" (which dealt with inter-racial marriage) O'Neill's steelworker friends had to guard the theater from Ku Klux Klan and other racist terrorists. Such incidents were repeated many times during Robeson's personal and public life.

Early in 1947, he announced that he was giving up his formal concert career so he could bring his art to the masses. "They can have their concerts," he said. "I'll go back to their cities to sing for the people whom I love—the Negro and white workers whose freedom will ensure my freedom."

Robeson was chairman of the Council of African Affairs (1940-1955).

During the 1948 Presidential elections, he served as co-chairman of the Progressive Party.

On December 17, 1951, Robeson, accompanied by 15 other members of the Civil Rights Congress (CRC), white and Black, presented the petition "We Charge Genocide," to the United Nations general secretariat in New York. On the same day William L. Patterson, national executive secretary of the CRC, presented copies of the petition to delegations of the UN General Assembly in Paris.

Robeson spoke out against the flagrant violations of the constitutional rights of the Black people, against lynch terror and police brutality, against disfranchisement, against segregation and discrimination.

He early understood the historical liberating role of the working class and the indispensability of the alliance of the Black people with democratic and progressive labor. He joined the picketlines in support of Black and white workers in their struggles for better conditions.

In 1948, when the National Board of the Communist Party, USA, was being tried under the infamous Smith Act on phony charges of conspiracy to advocate overthrow of the government by force and violence, Robeson in all his dignity testified that he knew each of the defendants in the dock and that they were his friends.

Speaking of the late Ben Davis, one of the defendants, Robeson said: "Benjamin J. Davis is a dear friend of mine and I have always been pleased to say so; and he has been for many years a leader of the Communist Party of this country." "I have known Ben Davis for a long time. I admired him when as a young lawyer in Atlanta, he bravely defended a framed-up Negro youth and eventually won the case; I admired him later when, as a City Councilman in New York, he championed the rights of our people; and I admired him when, during his imprisonment, he began a legal fight to break down the Jim Crow system in the federal penitentiaries.

"How could I not feel friendly to a man like that?"

In 1950, Robeson's passport was canceled and for eight years, until mass pressure enabled him to regain his passport, he was unable to go abroad and continue in his role as an artist of the international anticolonial movement.

The "Let Paul Robeson Sing" movement crested in a great international celebration and protest in nearly 30 countries on April 9, 1958, Robeson's 60th birthday.

Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru said: "This day should be celebrated not only because Mr. Robeson is one of the greatest artists of our generation, but because he fights and suffers for a cause which should be dear to all of us; for human dignity."

At home, his bookings were canceled and he was denied public facilities. Strenuous efforts were made to wipe out his achievements and erase him from the memory of the people. But these repressive actions in no wise daunted Robeson, he continued to sing for the masses he so dearly loved in churches, in labor halls, and in open-air concerts.

Summoned before the House Un-American Committee (HUAC) Robeson said: "I stand here struggling for the rights of my people to be full citizens in this country. They are not—in Mississippi. They are not—in Montgomery. That is why I am here today . . . You want to shut up every colored person who wants to fight for the rights of his people!"

Expressing his credo in *Here I Stand*, Robeson said: "I speak as an American Negro whose life is dedicated, first and foremost, to winning full freedom, and nothing less than full freedom for my people in America. Let me make one thing very clear. I care nothing, less than nothing, about what the lords of the land, the BIG WHITE FOLKS think of me and my ideas. But I do care and deeply care, about the America of the common people."

Ill health during the last few years forced Robeson to curtail his illustrious career.

On his 75th birthday, a large meeting in Carnegie Hall paid tribute to Robeson. Robeson was already too ill to attend the meeting in person, but in a message to the meeting, he said, "I want you to know that I am the same Paul, dedicated as ever to the world-wide cause of humanity, for freedom, peace and brotherhood. Together with the partisans of peace—the peoples of the socialist countries and the progressive elements in all other countries—rejoice that the movement for peaceful coexistence has made important gains and that the advocates of cold war and 'containment' have had to retreat."

Robeson is survived by a son, Paul, Jr., his wife, Marylyn, a grandson, a grand daughter, and a sister, Ms. Marion Forsythe, of Philadelphia, with whom he lived during the past few years.

Robeson is gone but his legacy remains. His marching songs are deathless. They will echo in the hearts of humanity through the ages.

Forge Negro-Labor Unity for Peace and Jobs*

I am profoundly happy to be here tonight.

No meeting held in America at this mid-century turning point in world history holds more significant promise for the bright future toward which humanity strives than this National Labor Conference for Negro Rights. For here are gathered together the basic forces—the Negro sons and daughters of labor and their white brothers and sisters—whose increasingly active intervention in national and world affairs is an essential requirement if we are to have a peaceful and democratic solution of the burning issues of our times.

Again we must recall the state of the world in which we live, and especially the America in which we live. Our history as Americans, Black and white, has been a long battle, so often unsuccessful, for the most basic rights of citizenship, for the most simple standards of living, the avoidance of starvation—for survival.

I have been up and down the land time and again, thanks in the main to you trade unionists gathered here tonight. You helped to arouse American communities to give answer to Peekskill, to protect the right of freedom of speech and assembly. And I have seen and daily see the unemployment, the poverty, the plight of our children, our youth, the backbreaking labor of our women—and too long, too long have my people wept and mourned. We're tired of this denial of a decent existence. We demand some approximation of the American democracy we have helped to build.

* The following is the address delivered at a meeting of the National Labor Conference for Negro Rights, held in Chicago on June 10, 1950, and attended by more than 900 delegates. Paul Robeson was at the time Chairman of the Council on African Affairs, a member of the executive committee of the World Peace Congress and national leader of the Progressive Party, in addition to his activities as a concert singer and actor of world renown.

The speech, of course, bears the hallmarks of the times in which it was delivered. It was straightforward and to the point in its assessment of the people and events of the time, in the face of the fierce McCarthyite assault against the U.S. democratic forces and the U.S. imperialist offensive against the world forces of peace and socialism. It should be borne in mind by the reader that in the years that followed some among those mentioned under the pressures of reaction reversed themselves and defected from the camp of the progressive forces.—*Editor*

Who Built This Land?

For who built this great land of ours?

Who have been the guarantors of our historic democratic tradition of freedom and equality? Whose labor and whose life has produced the great cities, the industrial machine, the basic culture and the creature comforts of which our "Voice of America" spokesmen so proudly boast?

It is well to remember that the America which we know has risen out of the toil of the many millions who have come here seeking freedom from all parts of the world:

The Irish and Scotch indentured servants who cleared the forests, built the colonial homesteads and were part of the productive backbone of our early days.

The millions of German immigrants of the mid-nineteenth century; the millions more from Eastern Europe whose sweat and sacrifice in the steel mills, the coal mines and the factories made possible the industrial revolution of the Eighties and Nineties; the brave Jewish people from all parts of Europe and the world who have so largely enriched our lives on this new continent; the workers from Mexico and from the East—Japan and the Philippines—whose labor has helped make the West and Southwest a rich and fruitful land.

And, through it all, from the earliest days—before Columbus—the Negro people, upon whose unpaid toil as slaves the basic wealth of this nation was built!

These are the forces that have made America great and preserved our democratic heritage.

They have arisen at each moment of crisis to play the decisive role in our national affairs.

The Strength of the Negro People

In the Civil War, hundreds of thousands of Negro soldiers who took arms in the Union cause won, not only their own freedom—the freedom of the Negro people—but, by smashing the institution of slave labor, provided the basis for the development of trade unions of free working men in America.

And so, even today, as this National Labor Conference for Negro Rights charts the course ahead for the whole Negro people and their sincere allies, it sounds a warning to American bigotry and reaction. For if fifteen million Negroes led by their staunchest sons and daughters of labor, and joined by the white working class, say

that there shall be no more Jim Crow in America, then there shall be no more Jim Crow!

If fifteen million Negroes say, and mean it, no more anti-Semitism, then there shall be no more anti-Semitism!

If fifteen million Negroes, inspired by their true leaders in the labor movement, demand an end to the persecution of the foreign-born, then the persecution of the foreign-born will end!

If fifteen million Negroes in one voice demand an end to the jailing of the leaders of American progressive thought and culture and the leaders of the American working class, then their voice will be strong enough to empty the prisons of the victims of America's cold war.

If fifteen million Negroes are for peace, then there will be peace!

And behind these fifteen million are 180 million of our African brothers and sisters, 60 million of our kindred in the West Indies and Latin America—for whom, as for us, war and the Point Four Program would mean a new imperialist slavery.

The Issues of Our Time

I know that you understand these problems—and especially the basic problem of peace. You have already outlined the issues in your sessions, and they are clear to liberty-loving men around the world.

Shall we have atom-bomb and hydrogen bomb and rocketship and bacteriological war, or shall we have peace in the world; the hellish destruction of the men, women and children, of whole civilian populations, or the peaceful construction of the good life everywhere?

This for all men is the over-riding issue of the day. From it all other questions flow. Its solution, one way or the other, will decide the fate of all other questions which concern the human family.

For the warmakers are also the fascist-minded; and the warmakers are also the profit-hungry trusts who drive labor, impose Taft-Hartley laws and seek to crush the unions.

Depending on how we succeed in the fight for peace, then, we shall find the answers to the other two major questions of the day.

Shall we have fascist brute rule or democratic equality and friendship among peoples and nations; the triumphant enshrinement of the "master race" theories our soldiers died to destroy, or liberty and freedom for the American people and their colonial allies throughout the world?

And finally, shall we have increased wealth for the already bloated

monopolies in the midst of rising hunger, poverty and disease for the world's poor; or shall the masses of toiling men and women enjoy the wealth and comforts which their sweat and labor produce?

American Imperialism vs. the Colonial World

Yes, these are the issues.

They will be resolved in our time—and you may be sure that you have met, not a moment too soon. Because in the five years since V-J Day the American trusts and the government which they control have taken their stand more and more openly on the side of a cold war which they are desperately trying to heat up; on the side of the fascist and kingly trash which they seek to restore to power all over Europe and Asia; on the side of the princes of economic privilege whose every cent of unprecedented profits is wrung out of the toil-broken bodies of the masses of men.

Mr. Truman and Mr. Acheson want us to believe that they seek peace in the world. But the people's memory is not so short.

How well and how bitterly do we recall that soon after Roosevelt died American arms were being shipped to the Dutch—not for the protection of the Four Freedoms, not to advance the claims of liberty—but for the suppression of the brave Indonesian patriots in their fight for independence.

That was in 1946, and today—four years later—we have the announcement of another program of arms shipments to destroy a movement for colonial independence—this time arms for the French imperialists to use against the brave Viet-Namese patriots in what the French progressive masses call the "dirty war" in Indo-China.

These two acts of the Truman Administration are significant landmarks of our time!

They cry out to the world that our nation, born in a bloody battle for freedom against imperialist tyranny, has itself become the first enemy of freedom and the chief tyrant of the mid-century world. They warn more than half the world's population who people the vast continents of Asia and Africa that, until the course of our foreign policy is changed, they can no longer look to the U.S. government for help in their strenuous struggles for a new and independent life.

And, to be sure, they have already averted their gaze from us.

In every subject land, in every dependent area, the hundreds of millions who strive for freedom have set their eyes upon a new star that rises in the East—they have chosen as the model for their conduct the brave people and stalwart leaders of the new

People's Republic of China.* And they say to our atom-toting politicians, "Send your guns and tanks and planes to our oppressors, if you will! We will take them away from them and put them to our own use! We will be free in spite of you, if not with your help!

Africa in World Affairs

What special meaning does this challenge of the colonial world have for American Negro workers and their allies?

We must not forget that each year 4,000 tons of uranium ore are extracted from the Belgian Congo—the main source of United States supply. And that Africa also provides more than half the world's gold and chrome, 80 per cent of its cobalt, 90 per cent of its palm kernels, one-fifth of its manganese and tin, one-third of its sisal fiber and 60 per cent of its cocoa—not to mention untold riches yet unexplored.

And with this wealth, Africa produces also an immeasurable portion of the world's human misery and degradation.

But the African peoples are moving rapidly to change their miserable conditions. And 180 million natives on that great continent are an important part of the colonial tidal wave that is washing upon the shores of history and breaking through the ramparts of imperialist rule everywhere.

The Congo skilled worker extracting copper and tin from the rich mines of the land of his fathers may one day be faced with the same materials in the shape of guns provided his Belgian rulers by the Truman Administration under the Marshall Plan—but he is determined that the days of his virtual slave labor are numbered, and that the place for the Belgians to rule is in *Belgium* and *not in the Congo*.

And 25 million Nigerians—farmers, cattle raisers, miners, growers of half the world's cocoa—are determined that the land of *our* fathers (for the vast majority of American Negro slaves were brought here from Africa's West Coast)—shall belong to their fathers' sons and not to the freebooters and British imperialists sup-

* This statement was made only a year after the victory of the Chinese revolution, an event widely recognized and hailed as second in significance only to the October Revolution. At the time the Chinese People's Republic adhered to the principles of solidarity of the socialist camp, headed by the Soviet Union, and of the struggle for peace. Some years later Mao Tse Tung and his followers led China to opportunistically repudiate these principles and ultimately to its present position of collaboration with the most belligerent forces of world imperialism.—*Editor*

ported by American dollars.

And twelve South African workers lie dead, shot in a peaceful demonstration by Malan's fascist-like police, as silent testimony to the fact that, for all their pass laws, for all their native compounds, for all their Hitler-inspired registration of natives and non-whites, the little clique that rules South Africa are baying at the moon. For it is later than they think in the procession of history, and that rich land must one day soon return to the natives on whose backs the proud skyscrapers of the Johannesburg rich were built.

How are we to explain this new vigor of the African independence movements? What is it that shakes a continent from Morocco to the Cape and causes the old rulers to tremble?

The core of the African nationalist movements, the heart of the resistance to continued oppression, the guiding intelligence of the independence aspirations of the Africans is invariably the organizations of the workers of the continent. Trade unions have arisen all over Africa and, as everywhere in modern times, they are the backbone of the people's struggle.

And what is true of Africa is even more strikingly true in the West Indies, in Cuba, Brazil and the rest of Latin America where 60 million Negroes are building strong trade unions and demanding a new day.

So it was a proud day in the history of the laboring men and women of the world when these African workers—railroad men, miners, mechanics, sharecroppers, craftsmen, factory workers—clasped grips with white, brown, yellow and other black workers' hands around the world and formed the World Federation of Trade Unions!

Abdoulaye Diallo, General Secretary of the Congress of Trade Unions of the Sudan, and a Vice-President of the WFTU, and Gabriele D'Arboussier, who was denied a visa to attend this conference, stand as signals to the world that the African worker recognizes, not only that his future lies in strong and militant trade unionism, but also in his fraternal solidarity with workers of all climes and colors whose friends are his friends and whose enemies are his also.

The Truman Plan for Africa

However much the official density of the top leadership of American labor may have prevented it from recognizing the real significance of the emergence of African labor, the American trusts and their hirelings in government have not been asleep. They have been steadily carrying forward their own plan for Africa, of which

Truman's Point Four program is an essential though by no means the only part.

First, they say, we will spend the tax money of the American people to prop up the shaky empire builders of Europe who own and control most of Africa. And so the Marshall Plan sends billions to France, Italy, Belgium and Portugal.

Second, they say, as a guarantee that the money is not wasted, we will send them arms under the Atlantic Pact so that they may put down any rising of the African peoples, or any demonstrations of sympathy for colonial freedom on the part of their own working classes.

Third, say the American banker-imperialists, with these guarantees, we will launch Point Four, which opens the door for investment of capital by American big business in African raw material and cheap labor.

Fourth, as an added guarantee that the investment of American monopoly—already garnered as surplus profits from the labor of speeded-up American workers—does not run the "risk" of any changes in government or "excessive" demands for living wages by African workers, we will build our *own* bases in Accra, Dakar and all over the African continent.

And fifth, should all these precautions fail: should the African people eventually kick us and the British and the French and the Belgians and the Italians and Portuguese rulers out of their continent, then, says the Point Four program, we will compensate the American big business investors for their losses—again out of the public treasury, the people's tax money.

Yes, this is the Truman plan for Africa, and the Africans don't like it and are saying so louder and louder every day.

But is it only at the continent of Asia and Africa that the tentacles of the American billionaires are aimed? Indeed not!

Ask the people of Greece whose partisans continue an uneven struggle for democracy and independence as a consequence of the original Truman Doctrinel

Ask the Italian or French worker who, as a "beneficiary" of the Atlantic Arms Pact and the Marshall Plan, sees the ships bring American tanks and guns to his land while his children go hungry and ill-clad in the face of sky-rocketing prices!

Ask the workers in Scandinavia and Britain who are weary of governments incapable of meeting their needs because they are the slavish captives of the American money-men who seek to dominate the world!

Ask the millions in Western Germany who see American influence placing unrepentant fascists back into positions of power, before the stench of the Dachaus and Buchenwalds—the Hitler crematoriums and mass murder camps—have fully left the land.

Ask the proud citizens of the New Democracies of Eastern Europe and of the Soviet Union who suffered most in World War II and whose every yearning for peace and time to reconstruct their ravaged land is met by the arrogant obstruction of American diplomats!

They know and they will tell you without hesitation—these people who are two-thirds of the world's population—that the seat of danger of aggressive war and fascist oppression has shifted from the banks of the Rhine to the banks of the Potomac, from the Reich-chancellery of Hitler to the Pentagon Building, the State Department and the White House of the United States.

These peoples of the world look to us, the progressive forces in American life, Black and white together, to stop our government's toboggan ride toward war and destruction.

Do they look in vain? This conference answers, no!

The Task of Labor

Your tasks, then, are clear. The Negro trade unionists must increasingly exert their influence in every aspect of the life of the Negro community. No church, no fraternal, civic or social organization in our communities must be permitted to continue without the benefit of the knowledge and experience which you have gained through your struggles in the great American labor movement. You are called upon to provide the spirit, the determination, the organizational skill, the firm steel of unyielding militancy to the age-old strivings of the Negro people for equality and freedom.

On the shoulders of the Negro trade unionists there is the tremendous responsibility to rally the power of the whole trade-union movement, white and Black, to the battle for the liberation of our people, the future of our women and children. Anyone who fails in this does the Negro people a great disservice.

And to the white trade unionists presents—a special challenge. You must fight in the ranks of labor for the full equality of your Negro brothers; for their right to work at any job; to receive equal pay for equal work; for an end to Jim Crow unions; for real fair employment practices within the unions as well as in all other phases of the national life; for the elimination of the rot of white supremacy notions which the employers use to poison the minds

of the white workers in order to pit them against their staunchest allies, the Negro people—in short, for the unbreakable unity of the working people, Black and white, without which there can be no free trade unions, no real prosperity, no constitutional rights, no peace for anybody, whatever the color of his skin. To accept Negro leadership of men and women and youth; to accept the fact that the Negro workers have become a part of the vanguard of the whole American working class. To fail the Negro people is to fail the whole American people.

I know that you who have come from all parts of the nation will meet this challenge. I have watched and participated in your militant struggles everywhere I have been these past years. Here in Chicago with the packinghouse workers; with auto workers of Detroit; the seamen and longshoremen of the West Coast; the tobacco workers of North Carolina; the miners of Pittsburgh and West Virginia; and the steel workers of Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan and Minnesota; the furriers, clerks and office workers of New York, Philadelphia and numerous other big cities and small towns throughout the land.

I have met you at the train stations and airports, extending the firm hand of friendship. You have packed the meetings which followed Peekskill to overflowing, thus giving the answer to the bigots and the war-makers. I know you well enough to know that, once the affairs of my people are in the hands of our working men and women, our day of freedom is not far off. I am proud as an artist to be one who comes from hardy Negro working people—and I know that you can call on me at any time—South, North, East or West—all my energy is at your call.

So—as you move forward, you do so in the best traditions of American democracy and in league with hundreds of millions throughout the world whose problems are much the same as yours.

These are peoples of all faiths, all lands, all colors, and all political beliefs—united by the common thirst for freedom, security, and peace.

Our American press and commentators and politicians would discourage these basic human aspirations because Communists adhere to them as well as others. Now I have seen the liberty-loving, peace-seeking partisans in many parts of the world. And though many of them are not, it is also true that many *are* Communists. They represent a new way of life in the world, a new way that has won the allegiance of almost half the world's population. In the last war they were the first to die in nation after nation. They were

the heart of the underground anti-fascist movements and city after city in Europe displays monuments to their heroism. They need no apologies. They have been a solid core of the struggle for freedom.

Now, Mr. Truman and Mr. Acheson would have us believe that all the problems of this nation, and the chief difficulties of the Negro people are caused by these people who were the first anti-fascists.

I, for one, cannot believe that the jailing of Eugene Dennis for the reason that he contended that the House Un-American Activities Committee lacked proper constitutional authority because it harbored as a member John Rankin who holds office as a result of the disfranchisement of the Negro half of the population of Mississippi and most of the white half as well—I cannot believe that Dennis' jailing will help in the solution of the grievous problems of Negro working men and women.

Mr. Truman calls upon us to save the so-called Western democracies from the "menace" of Communism.

But ask the Negro ministers in Birmingham whose homes were bombed by the Ku Klux Klan what is the greatest menace in their lives! Ask the Trenton Six and the Martinsville Seven! Ask Willie McGee, languishing in a Mississippi prison and doomed to die within the next month unless our angry voices save him. Ask Haywood Patterson, somewhere in America, a fugitive from Alabama barbarism for a crime he, nor any one of the Scottsboro boys, ever committed. Ask the growing numbers of Negro unemployed in Chicago and Detroit. Ask the fearsome lines of relief clients in Harlem. Ask the weeping mother whose son is the latest victim of police brutality. Ask Maceo Snipes and Isaiah Nixon, killed by mobs in Georgia because they tried to exercise the constitutional right to vote. Ask any Negro worker receiving unequal pay for equal work, denied promotion despite his skill and because of his skin, still the last hired and the first fired. Ask fifteen million American Negroes, if you please, "What is the greatest menace in your life?" and they will answer in a thunderous voice, "Jim-Crow Justice! Mob Rule! Segregation! Job Discrimination!"—in short white supremacy and all its vile works.

Yes, we know who our friends are, and we know our enemies, too. Howard Fast,* author of the epic novel *Freedom Road* who went to jail this past Wednesday for fighting against the restoration of fascism in Spain, is not our enemy. He is a true friend of the Negro people. And George Marshall, Chairman of the Civil Rights Congress, who

* Fast later abandoned the Communist Party and renounced his progressive works and former associations to become a Zionist and active anti-Communist.—*Editor*

went to jail last Friday and whose fight for the life of Willie McGee of Mississippi is one of the great democratic sagas of our time—he is not our enemy; he is a true friend of the Negro people. And John Howard Lawson and Dalton Trumbo, Hollywood screen writers, who went to jail the day before yesterday for maintaining their faith in the sacred American doctrine of privacy of political belief—they too are friends of the people.

Our enemies are the lynchers, the profiteers, the men who give FEPC the run-around in the Senate, the atom-bomb maniacs and the war-makers.

One simple reason why I know that we shall win is that our friends are so much more numerous than our enemies. They will have to build many, many more jails—not only here but all over the world to hold the millions who are determined never to give up the fight for freedom, decency, equality, abundance, and peace.

I have just this past week returned from London where the Executive Committee of the World Partisans for Peace met to further their crusade against atomic destruction.* And there, spokesmen of millions of men and women from all parts of the globe—Europe, Asia, Africa, North and South America, Australia—pledged themselves anew that the Truman plan for the world shall not prevail—that peace shall conquer war—that men shall live as brothers, not as beasts.

These men and women of peace speak not merely for themselves, but for the nameless millions whose pictures do not adorn the newspapers, who hold no press conference, who are the mass of working humanity in every land.

Did I say nameless? Not any more! For one hundred million have already signed their names in all lands to a simple and powerful pledge, drawn up at Stockholm—a pledge which reads as follows:

We demand the unconditional prohibition of the atomic weapon as an instrument of aggression and mass extermination of people and the establishment of strict international control over the fulfillment of this decision. . . . We will regard as a war criminal that government which first uses the atomic weapon against any country.

The Soviet Union and China are signing this pledge. People in all nations of the world are signing it. Will you take this pledge now? (Audience answers a loud "Yes!")

Your meeting tonight as men and women of American labor is in

* On the 25th anniversary of the Stockholm Peace Pledge, a new appeal was launched calling for destruction of nuclear stockpiles and disarmament and is now being circulated for signatures.

good time because it places you in this great stream of peace-loving humanity, determined to win a world of real brotherhood. It will enable you, I hope, to place the Negro trade unionists in the front ranks of a crusade to secure at least a million signatures of Negro Americans to this Stockholm appeal for peace.

As the Black worker takes his place upon the stage of history—not for a bit part, but to play his full role with dignity in the very center of the action—a new day dawns in human affairs. The determination of the Negro workers, supported by the whole Negro people, and joined with the mass of progressive white working men and women, can save the labor movement, CIO and AFL, from the betrayals of the Murrays and the Greens, the Careys, Rieves and Dubinskys—and from the betrayals, too, of the Townsends, the Weavers and Randolphins. This alliance can beat back the attacks against the living standards and the very lives of the Negro people. It can stop the drive toward fascism. It can halt the chariot of war in its tracks.

And it can help to bring to pass in America and in the world the dream our fathers dreamed—of a land that's free, of a people growing in friendship, in love, in cooperation and peace.

This is history's challenge to you. I know you will not fail.

(Continued from p. 57)

needs. I do not believe that Socialists should soften and yield. . . ."

Jack resigned from the party in protest the year he died. This was the wrong thing to do. He should have fought for a revolutionary program inside. But his depression was deepening. The end came with an overdose of morphine in November 1916.

But we honor him today for his strength in our cause. His weaknesses were born of his time. We remember him as the voice of the most militant forces in the American revolutionary movement. And his strength was so great that millions of young people have been strengthened thereby.

ERRATUM

The first full sentence on page 13 of the March *Political Affairs* should read: "According to the California study, the ERA could invalidate the state protective laws for women which are still effective for employers of fewer than fifteen persons, who are not covered by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964."

BICENTENNIAL

ART SHIELDS

Why We Honor Jack London

“. . . And last of all, my faith is in the working class. As some Frenchman has said: 'The stairway of time is ever echoing with the wooden shoe going up, and the polished shoes descending.'" (From *What Life Means to Me*, by Jack London.)

• • •

Jack London was born in San Francisco on January 12, 1876. The World Peace Council is calling for celebrations of his centenary this year. Jack never forgot the class from which he sprang. He toiled in poverty from early childhood; and often went hungry while writing the stories that editors rejected. But by his latter twenties he was the most popular U.S. writer. He is still more widely read than any other American of his generation. More than 30 million Jack London volumes have been sold in one land alone. That country is the Soviet Union.

Jack London wrote the finest stories about the fight to survive in a hostile wilderness to come from an American pen. One of the greatest is *Love of Life*, a story of Arctic Canada, which Lenin's wife, Krupskaya, read to Lenin a few days before he died. But in celebrating his centenary we Communists are honoring the first U.S. literary genius to plunge into the struggle to overthrow the capitalist system and establish workers' power.

A few other American novelists had previously sown the seeds of socialism. Edward Bellamy, the author of *Looking Backward*, and William Dean Howells, who wrote *Travels in Altruria*, were among them, but their approach was utopian. Jack London was the first to base his hope for the future on the working class. And no other author won so many young people to the revolutionary movement.

Jack's understanding of the class struggle was in advance of the thinking of nearly all socialist leaders of his time. He came from the industrial workers, like Bill Haywood and Gene Debs. He knew

WHY WE HONOR JACK LONDON

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from life and from study that revolutionary power rested in the exploited workers he loved, and not in the middle class professionals who were acquiring leadership in the Socialist Party.

Nor did Jack London share these leaders' illusions about the multi-millionaires who shot down strikers and framed workers' leaders. He did not believe that these killers would surrender their power and give up their purpled ease when the socialists outvoted their political puppets. He pointed out this dramatically in *The Iron Heel*, his great revolutionary novel, and elsewhere. And he warned against the danger of a bloody Big Business dictatorship long before Benito Mussolini set up the first fascist state with the help of J.P. Morgan, Jr., and other U.S. financiers.

Unfortunately, this bold people's artist did not escape some negative influences from his environment, which gravely marred his work at times. We'll deal with them below. He had no wise friends to guide his childhood development, as he struggled for life in the home of an unemployed, unskilled worker who was finally crippled by an accident. No U.S. novelist of stature had had such a bleak childhood until then. He never had a toy or plaything. There was often no food in the house. "The pinch of poverty" was "chronic," he afterwards said. So the small child woke at 3 a.m. to distribute morning papers. He returned in the afternoon to distribute papers again, and worked hard on weekends. At 13 he quit school and toiled in an Oakland cannery for ten cents an hour, sometimes standing at his machine for 18 to 20 hours, and once working 36 hours without a break.

The youngster was numb with fatigue and fearful of his future. In this mood he eagerly listened to waterfront tales about the pirates who robbed the oyster merchants' boats in San Francisco Bay. He borrowed \$300 from a Black woman, a family friend, who had nursed him in infancy, and whom he afterwards supported until he died. With this money he bought a tiny sloop, the *Razzle Dazzle*, hired a crew, and got more cash in lucky nights than the cannery paid in weeks. He was then barely 15.

"I was a capitalist," he wrote in his essay, *What Life Means to Me*. "It was robbery, I grant, but it was precisely the spirit of capitalism. The capitalist takes away the possessions of his fellow creatures by . . . a betrayal of trust, or by the purchase of senators and supreme court judges. I was merely crude. That was the difference. I used a gun."

But his luck didn't last. Other pirates raided the *Razzle Dazzle* while Jack was away and stripped her clean. "They stole everything,

even the anchors," he said. "I had slipped back the one rung I had climbed, and never again did I attempt to climb the business ladder."

"From then on," added Jack, "I was mercilessly exploited by other capitalists. I had the muscle, and they made money out of it . . . I looked at the daughter of the cannery owner, in her carriage, and knew that it was my muscle that helped drag along that carriage on its rubber tires." But Jack said he didn't resent this at that time. He had more muscle now, and felt sure that he could work his way into the upper class.

Jack lost these capitalist illusions while still in his teens. I got the story from Jack himself in my high school auditorium in York, Pennsylvania. I had been devouring his stories since I read *The Call of the Wild* three years before, and jumped at the chance to hear him. His talk struck such deep roots that I can repeat its substance and some of its language after 70 years.

I also remember Jack's unconventional costume. In those days lecturers wore swallow-tail coats. But Jack spoke in an open jacket that bared his broad chest. And best of all was his smile. I felt at home with him as he talked about his life at my age.

Jack eased into his anti-capitalist propaganda gradually, and began with an adventure story. He shipped out at 17 on a schooner that was raiding the seal herds in the waters off the Asian coast. There were exciting storm scenes. There was constant danger of capture by Japanese or Russian ships. Men told horror stories of sealers who were entombed in Japanese dungeons or toiled in mines under the Tsarist knout. And I lived with the boy sailor as I had lived in imagination with the seal pirates in Jack's novel, *The Sea Wolf*, and the pirates' brutal but brilliant captain, Wolf Larsen.

Jack's schooner, the *Sophie Sutherland*, had no Wolf Larsen, but it promised seven months of hell at first. "I had an able seamen's rating," Jack told us, "and I was fully qualified. The seals are taken from small boats that put out from the schooner, and I knew more about small boat sailing than most of the crew. I had learned it in San Francisco Bay. But the older men wouldn't accept a youngster as an equal. They expected me to do chores for them night and day. And I had nothing to protect me but my fists."

Some rough and tumble battles followed, which Jack, a boxing fan, knew how to describe, before he won equality.

Jack found the streets of Oakland filled with unemployed men when the *Sophie Sutherland* docked in the summer of 1893. A terrible depression was under way. "But I wasn't discouraged," Jack

said. "I felt sure that my chance to work my way up was coming. And perhaps I would marry the boss's daughter like the boys in the success stories I read in the library."

But the chance didn't come. After giving his wages to his hungry family Jack finally got a soul-killing job in a jute mill at ten cents an hour. There he worked side by side with eight-year olds, who were getting 30 cents a day. Jack later described the life of these enslaved kids in his story, *The Apostate*, the best child labor story I've read.

As Jack talked I wondered why kids had to suffer so much. I too had read those success stories in my Sunday school library. I had seen the brightest boys in my class quit school for factory jobs to pay the family bills. They had little time or energy for study after a ten or 12-hour day, and little hope for advancement. Something was wrong. Jack was making that plain. And I was glad when Jack said that he finally chucked the jute job. He decided that his muscles would wear out and he would be thrown on the scrap heap if he remained an unskilled worker. He would learn a profession with a future, he told us.

Jack selected electricity, which was then in its beginnings. A small power plant had opened in Oakland. He visited the company's president and talked of his ambition.

"The great man was very sympathetic," said Jack. "He promised me a fine future. 'But you must start at the bottom,' he insisted. 'Some day you may be superintendent of this plant. But before you are a superintendent you must be a good engineer, who understands boilers. And before you are an engineer you must be a good fireman. But you don't start as a fireman. You must first learn how to pass coal.'"

So Jack found himself shoveling coal 14 hours a day at \$30 a month, with one day a month off—"Perhaps for the development of my mind." He grinned sarcastically as he said this. "The fire ate up coal so fast that I had no time for lunch. I just grabbed mouthfuls of sandwich between scoops."

"I was supposed to have a 12-hour day," said Jack. "But the work was never done when the whistle blew at six. I always had to work overtime without overtime pay to build up the coal pile for the night fireman."

Then Jack told us something which doesn't appear in his written accounts. "My muscles stiffened so badly when I sat down in the street car on my way home that I had to begin getting up several streets before my stopping place. And one night I heard an old lady

saying, "That boy is terribly dissipated. What a shame!"

"I was dissipated," Jack commented. "I was dissipated with work."

This dissipation went on for nearly a month until the day fireman swore Jack to secrecy and told him that he had displaced two men, who were now on the streets, looking for work. Each of the displaced men had been getting \$40 a month. The company president was saving \$50 by taking advantage of Jack's ambitions.

Most of Jack's illusions were now shattered. He hadn't yet learned about socialism, but he vowed that he would never let anyone make money out of his muscles again. "I wasn't always able to keep that promise," Jack told us. "But I was through with hard work at that time." And he went down to the railroad yards and climbed on top of an outbound freight train.

Jack chatted without notes, like one of ourselves. We felt we were in the boxcars with him. We shared his disgust at the "justice" he found in a magistrate's court in Niagara Falls, New York. He wasn't allowed a word of defense; all the judge said was "Thirty days" as Jack was led away with 15 other jobless men on "vagrancy" charges.

We chuckled at Jack's humorous bits about the railroad "bulls" he outwitted, and we enjoyed the way he induced housewives to bring out the coffee and sandwiches by telling them he was going back to mother. But underneath these light touches was the picture of a hungry kid, who wondered why society was cruel to jobless men.

Jack visited my high school during a cross-country tour for the Inter-collegiate Socialist Society, of which he was president. He had spoken at Yale University a few days before. His subject was "Revolution." The Russian Revolution of 1905-1906 was under way. The world socialist movement was expanding. Jack told 3,000 students and professors that this socialist upsurge was a "distinctly working-class revolt." The movement had middle-class friends, he agreed. But only the working class had the strength to win socialism.

Jack called the Russian revolutionaries his "brothers" at Harvard soon after the York lecture. Some 2,000 were present. It's worth noting that John Reed, the future author of *Ten Days That Shook the World*, the stirring narrative of the great socialist revolution, entered Harvard the next fall. It's not unlikely that our finest revolutionary reporter drew some of his inspiration from Jack London.

I confess that I remember little of what Jack said of the future workers' world. My attention at 17 was fixed on the stories of his youth. But his brilliant contrasting pictures of swindling employers and hungry workers bit into my mind and prepared me for the socialist ideas that I got from a shopmate later.

From Philip S. Foner's book, *Jack London, American Rebel*, the best study of London, we learn that Jack got his first vision of the future while "on the road." He found some revolutionists among the men he met in boxcars and in the "jungles," where men camped outdoors. They spoke of the power of workers united. They told Jack about worldwide movements to overthrow capitalism. And they mentioned Karl Marx, Frederick Engels and the *Communist Manifesto*.

Jack found the *Manifesto* when he returned to Oakland at 19. His notebook heavily underlined the conclusion, which stresses the workers' role. It said: "The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to gain. Working men of all countries unite!"

"Jack never forget these words," said Foner. "He used them in streetcorner speeches, in addresses before university audiences . . . and in revolutionary essays, short stories and novels. He had only contempt for those socialists who wanted to tone down the final paragraphs of the *Manifesto*."

And Foner made this comment: "It was in combatting reformist influences in the Socialist Party that Jack London was to make his greatest contribution as a speaker and writer."

We do not know how deeply Jack delved into the Marxist classics. Not many had been published in the U.S.A. by his early socialist years. But we do know that he carried the first volume of *Capital* into the Arctic, along with Darwin's *Origin of Species*, Milton's *Paradise Lost* and a volume of Herbert Spencer. The dialogues in *The Iron Heel* show that Marx's master work was studied.

Jack joined the small Socialist Labor Party local in Oakland in his final teen year, 1895, and was pulled off a soapbox and arrested soon afterwards. That was five years before the Socialist Party was born.

Meanwhile he was an active socialist propagandist at the Oakland High School. In the few months he was there he wrote ten stories and essays for the students' literary magazine. One was an argument for socialism. Most of the others were based on the diary he kept "on the road."

Jack was already planning a literary career. In his mind was a gallery of fascinating characters and many dramatic struggle scenes. To understand life better he began an intense self-study course in history, economics and the sciences. And to gain facility he wrote night and day for publishers, who consistently rejected his stories and poems. His cash went for stamps. His stepfather was unemployed; his family was hungry. So Jack broke his vow against muscle work and took a job in the laundry of a private school for \$30 a month

and board.

Jack had to work 80 hours a week at frantic speed to keep up with the endless flow of shirts, collars and cuffs that were washed and ironed by hand. He was too exhausted at night to look at the books he brought with him. But the job left one good legacy! It gave him material for one of the best chapters in *Martin Eden*, his semi-autobiographical novel. This novel "is an attack upon the bourgeoisie and all that the bourgeoisie stands for," he told George Sterling, the poet, a socialist friend. And the laundry chapter is one of the hardest-hitting exposes in literature of an employer's speedup system.

Then Jack felt the pull of the Klondike gold rush. He chucked the deadly laundry job, borrowed money from a married sister in March 1897, and was climbing the steep walls of Chilcoot Pass near the Alaska-Canada border with 150 pounds on his back several weeks later.

But Chilcoot was only the beginning. "The last pack into [Lake] Linderman was three miles," Jack wrote later. "I back-tracked it four times a day, and on each forward trip carried 150 pounds. That meant that over the worst trails I daily traveled 24 miles, 12 of which were under a burden of 150 pounds."

After another 500 miles—mostly by home-made boats—Jack's party was snowbound with many other prospectors 72 miles from Dawson, the gold-rush town on the Yukon.

But this didn't worry Jack. He had come for nuggets of literary material, not nuggets of gold. His cabin was a social center for snowbound prospectors. He crammed his notebooks with tales that came to life again in his books later. He made winter prospecting trips with his new friends, mushed dog teams and discussed socialism and books by the fireside at night.

Jack found still richer nuggets in Dawson in spring. Our continent had never seen anything like this Arctic boom town. Fifty thousand miners, prostitutes, gamblers, saloonkeepers and confidence men had mushed in within a year. Men sprawled at night on the floors of saloons, gambling halls and dance parlors. Millionaire bonanza kings in rawhide boots flung gold dust on faro tables, where gamblers with deadpan faces were striking it rich. Busted prospectors, who had found nothing better than gravel, were begging for "grubstakes" to start out again. Out-of-tune pianos rattled in dance halls while malamute dogs howled outside. And guns went off from time to time.

Jack put this raw life into notebooks day by day. He studied men's faces at the gaming tables where fortunes were won and lost. He

talked to men mushing in from the creeks with stories of failure or success. And most of all he listened to old timers who came North before the big stampede. Some had Indian wives.

This research ended when Jack was smitten by scurvy for lack of green vegetables. After a stay in the Catholic hospital he floated down the Yukon with friends in an open boat, fattening his notebook with river life for 2,000 miles. At St. Michaels he got a job firing a small steamer, and finally arrived in Oakland without a cent after an absence of 16 months.

Jack's active literary life was about to begin. At this point someone may wonder why I give so much space to his preparatory years. I do so because he could not have carved out his unique niche in our cultural and political history without this unique background. As he told his publisher, Macmillan, in 1907, "I have become what I am because of my past." The class feeling in his best books was nourished by years of exploitation by ruthless employers. The theme of struggle that runs through his work grew out of his own struggles and the struggles he witnessed. And his understanding of life was the fruit of his studies in the revolutionary movement.

His first literary successes came after a sad homecoming. His kind old stepfather, a Civil War veteran, was dead. The family was destitute. The depression was continuing. Jack couldn't get a steady job and began writing for the editors again. He wrote 15 hours a day for four months without a single publication until the editor of *The Overland Monthly*, a San Francisco magazine, accepted a Klondike story and promised a five dollar fee.

The story, *To The Man on The Trail*, was written when Jack was 22. This is not one of his finest creations, but it crackles with Jack London vitality and defies law-and-order conventions. It tells how a group of sourdoughs interrupts a jolly Christmas party to supply a miner with rest, provisions and dog food to speed him on his way from the Canadian Northwest Mounted Police. The miner had raided a gambling hall to recover the gold—his gold—that a partner had blown. The pursuing Mountie, when he arrives with exhausted dogs, gets no help. And the merrymaking resumes to the toasts of "To the man on the trail!" and "Confusion to the Mounted Police!"

Jack London was striking a new note in U.S. literature. I remember the classless writers I read in childhood. Their novels dealt with imaginary lords and ladies of the Middle Ages or the drawing room romances of the upper class. And almost every reference to "the coarse, the cruel and the terrible" in life was barred from the popular magazines, as Theodore Dreiser once said.

There were a few oases in the literary desert. Frank Norris and Hamlin Garland, for instance, were writing enduring stories about the farmers. And one giant towered over the arid plain. That was Mark Twain, whose attacks on U.S. imperialism are as fresh as ever today. But Mark Twain's story-writing days were ending. And the America of the miner, the seaman and the factory worker was far from our readers when Jack London appeared.

Jack's first successes were short-lived. A larger check from an Eastern magazine was swallowed by debts. His watch, bicycle and winter suit were swallowed by the pawnbroker. He was about to abandon plans for a literary career and take a letter carrier's job when his mother said "No." She believed in his genius. They would be hungry together.

With his mother behind him Jack went back to writing and study. He set the alarm for five hour sleeps, turning out 1,000 to 1,500 words of stories, essays and poems daily. He devoured Shakespeare, Goethe, Balzac, Zola, Dickens, Hardy, Poe, Kipling, Stevenson, Stephen Crane, Turgenev—and Gorky, whose early life as a wandering worker was something like his. Gorky impressed him especially. He also went back to Darwin, Marx and Spencer—and added Nietzsche, whose blond beast superman philosophy was to influence him unduly.

Meanwhile the family lived on scanty rations of potatoes and beans from more *Overland Monthly* stories. But the tide began turning a little after four more months later by several acceptances from other journals. In June 1899 the *American Journal of Education* ran two Jack London articles on the English language and the use of verbs. This gave him some reputation as a scholar.

Jack London's fame as a writer of fast-moving action scenes depends much on his extraordinary skill with verbs. Many scenes demonstrating this come to mind, but I'll refer only to the following—the climactic battle in Chicago in *The Iron Heel*, the stirring strike scene in *South of the Slot*, a San Francisco workers' story, Buck's rescue of his beloved owner in *The Call of The Wild*, and the storm scenes in *The Sea Wolf*.

At last, in 1899, when Jack was still 23, the *Atlantic Monthly* departed from its conventional traditions and bought the best story he had yet written. This was *An Odyssey of the North*, the grim but gripping tale of an Aleut's revenge on a rich white man who kidnaped his bride. His enemy, a Nietzschean blond beast of gigantic size, is skillfully lured to his death in a hungry wilderness by his greed for gold. But the brown man's victory was fruitless. The stolen bride

had fallen in love with the kidnapper and the life of comfort she led with him.

Recognition by the *Atlantic* opened more publishers' doors. Jack's first volume of short stories appeared soon thereafter.

Jack, meanwhile, let nothing interfere with his revolutionary work. He gave weekly lectures for the Socialist Party, which he joined in 1900, and was the Oakland local's candidate for mayor in 1901, running again several years later. He also wrote many articles for the party press and became a national socialist figure with the publication of *The People of the Abyss* in 1902.

The People Of The Abyss is Jack's eye-witness report of misery and death in the impoverished East End of London. In this kind of reportage it has seldom been approached. Jack lived with this misery for three months. Disguising himself as a marine fireman who had missed his ship, he visited many sweatshops, walked the streets with homeless men and spent nights in ghastly workhouses that hadn't improved since Dickens' day.

Jack gives us heart-rending pictures of men, women and children toiling for almost nothing in fetid air, and homeless men picking up orange peels and apple skins from the "slimy, spittle-drenched pavement."

The People Of The Abyss abounds with sharp class contrasts. The British capital was the world's financial capital in 1902. King Edward VII was being crowned with ruling class pomp during Jack's stay. Jack draws convincing socialist conclusions. And we feel his anger as he tells the story.

Jack's most popular book, *The Call of the Wild*, is perhaps the best dog book of all time. Some scenes read like poems, and it was an immediate success. Six million copies had been sold by 1947 when Foner's biography of London appeared. It made the former child laborer into America's favorite story-teller.

This was followed by *The Sea Wolf*, which became a best seller at once. Jack admired Herman Melville and Joseph Conrad, the great sea-going novelists, very much. But *The Sea Wolf* is a thing by itself. And I think he was right when he complained that the book was misunderstood by many critics. They assumed that he was glorifying the Nietzschean superman, but Jack replied that he was exposing individualism instead. The central figure, Wolf Larsen, the sealers' captain, looks like a superman through most of the story. He is not only a physical Titan, but also a brilliant but cynical intellectual. He rules by terror and despises his crew and seems to be winning. But when he falls sick he has no one to help him and is marooned

by his former subjects in the Arctic.

Jack's attitude to the superman was quite contradictory. In *The Iron Heel* he calls Nietzsche a "mad philosopher." In *Martin Eden*, the central character is answered when he urges "a strong man . . . on horseback" to save the state. His friend Brissenden, a socialist poet, quickly replies: "The slaves won't stand for it. They are too many . . . they'll drag your equestrian down."

Nevertheless Jack sometimes presents his heroes as supermen. Thus Ernest Everhard, the hero of *The Iron Heel*, is introduced as a "superman, a blond beast such as Nietzsche described, and in addition he was aflame with democracy."

Nietzsche, the anti-democrat, had no such superman in mind.

The superman, however, is kept out of *What Life Means To Me* and other splendid revolutionary essays. These essays were supplemented by fighting articles on workers' struggles. Among them is *Something Rotten in Idaho*, which appeared in the *Chicago Socialist* on October 4, 1906. It is a scorching attack on the copper bosses and Pinkerton detectives who were framing Haywood, Moyer and Pettibone, leaders of the Western Federation of Miners, on false murder charges.

Jack had the warmest admiration for Bill Haywood and Eugene Debs. Both were symbols of workers' power. He told his close friend, Frank Strawn-Hamilton, an IWW philosopher whom I knew in his later years, that he enjoyed writing *The Dream of Debs*. This is a workers' power story. It tells in an intimate, human way how organized labor tied San Francisco up so tightly in a general strike that the capitalists surrendered in order to get something to eat. It was issued as a pamphlet by the IWW some 30 years before the famous San Francisco general strike of 1934.

Jack often entertained IWW's and AFL unionists in his home, and he sometimes spoke in union halls. But he sharply rejected the class collaborationist policies that were followed by AFL President Samuel Gompers and fellow leaders who were working closely with employers in the National Civic Federation. In *The Iron Heel* he tells how high craft union leaders split the workers' ranks and went over to the enemy.

I think now that *The Iron Heel* underestimated the resistance that the rank and file would offer to such betrayals. And it is clear that it overestimated the ability of fascism to survive for a long time in an industrial country. One may also disagree with some of the revolutionary tactics described in this book, which was written 70 years ago. But Jack London's indictment of the industrial and finan-

cial monopolists as the people's main enemy is as true as ever. And history shows that his warning against fascism was prophetic. *The Iron Heel* is one of the world's classics, Anatole France said. One can understand why Soviet readers waited in line at bookstores when new editions appeared.

In 1907 Jack bought a small sailing ship and set out for the South Seas for more story material. Unfortunately this cut him off from his working-class friends for 25 months. It also gave him the society of the very unsavory whites who infested the Pacific Islands. They were traders and whiskey-swilling adventurers, not workers. Some were engaged in recruiting Black Solomon Islanders by trickery and violence for indentured labor on copra plantations.

This poisonous atmosphere stimulated the white supremacy virus that infected Jack in his childhood.

I referred earlier to negative influences in Jack's environment that marred his work. He grew up in California in the 19th century, when mobs were incited against Chinese workers, and "yellow peril" headlines flamed in the press. California had been stolen from Mexico a generation before Jack's birth. Mexican workers got a very dirty deal. And a common way of praising someone was to say, "He's one of the whitest men I know."

This virus was not confined to California, of course. The overwhelming majority of white Americans, including nearly all white writers, were affected. A partial exception was Mark Twain—not the young Mark Twain, who abused the Indian people in the pages of *Roughing It*, but the middle-aged Mark Twain of *Huckleberry Finn* and Jim, the runaway slave, one of the finest characters in literature, and the old Mark Twain, who defended the dark-skinned victims of imperialism in Asia and Africa.

In Jack's case the disease was often suppressed by a powerful antidote—the revolutionary movement. White supremacy didn't enter his socialist writings and speeches. He spoke of the brotherhood of workers of all races instead. But the virus would break out again, and this involved him in acute contradictions, as some examples will show.

In 1904 Jack was a correspondent in the Russian-Japanese war. The Japanese were winning. Jack—forgetting socialism—expressed his sorrow at seeing "white" prisoners in the hands of "brown" men.

But six months later Jack saw the brown men with socialist eyes. He lauded Japanese socialists for a splendid solidarity message they sent to Russian socialists during the war. The Japanese message denounced the war as imperialist, and said: ". . . for us socialists there are no boundaries, race, country or nationality. We are comrades,

brothers and sisters and have no reason to fight."

Jack quoted this in his essay, *Revolution*, and in several speeches.

In the novel *Burning Daylight* an Indian and a white man were mushing together against time in a mail contract on a 2,000-mile trail at 72 degrees below. Each was the "pick of his race." But the Indian couldn't continue the white man's pace and was a broken man at the end.

"That wouldn't happen," said my older brother Walter, who mushed thousands of Arctic miles and knew the native people better than Jack did. "London is a great story-teller," he told me, "but he's wrong in *Burning Daylight*. Indians and Eskimos are better on the trail."

But Jack reversed himself in his superb story, *The Mexican*. The Mexican is a full-blooded Indian youth, a boxer. His parents had been killed by a Yankee mine owner's gunmen. He gave all his fight purses to the revolt against Porforio Diaz, the Mexican dictator who played Wall Street's game. And he insisted on "Winner Take All" in a fight with a popular white boxer—a near champion—in Los Angeles.

This is a thrilling fight story that Jack tells round by round. The fight is rigged against the Indian. The white boxer fouls him repeatedly. And 10,000 whites are howling for his blood. But the best man wins. And more guns cross the border to overthrow Diaz in 1911. The Soviet Union filmed *The Mexican* for the third time this year.

We see Jack's contradictions again in his reports on Jack Johnson, the Black heavyweight champion. Jack went to Reno, Nevada, to report Johnson's ring battles with Jim Jeffries, the retired champion on July 4, 1910. It was billed as a race battle. London's first dispatch to the *New York Herald* nine days before the fight reflected the conventional white outlook. He described Johnson as a boxer with the "happy-go-lucky" temperament of a "child."

But London reversed himself completely after seeing Johnson work out. The Black champion was now a "wonder," not a "child." "For his time there has never been so clever a defensive boxer, nor has there ever been a cooler-headed boxer," said Jack. And he praised Johnson's wit that kept flashing while the gloves were flying.

And after the fight Jack said: "Once again Johnson sent down to defeat the chosen representative of the white race, and this time the greatest of them. . . The ferocity of this hairy-chested caveman, the grizzly giant, did not intimidate the cool-headed Negro.

"There is nothing primitive about this man Johnson . . . He is a marvel of sensitiveness, sensibility and perceptibility. He has a perfect mechanism of mind and body. His mind works like chain lightning and his body obeys with equal swiftness."

The supremacy was all on the Black fighter's side.

Jack London was not writing like a white supremacist then. Nor was he in *Koolau the Leper* and other stories of heroic dark-skinned men. Koolau, a former cowboy, heads a band of lepers in a flower-filled gorge in the mountains of Kauai, their native island. Leprosy had been brought to Hawaii by sugarfield slaves from distant lands. The Hawaiian victims were now defending themselves against exile. A gun battle with soldiers was about to begin. And Koolau, like Spartacus, begins addressing his band: "Brothers, is it not strange? Ours was the land, and behold, the land is not ours. What did these preachers of the word of God and the word of Rum give us for the land? Have you received as much as one dollar, any one of you, for the land? Yet it is theirs, and in return they tell us we can go to work on the land, their land, and that what we produce by our toil shall be theirs. Yet in the old days we did not have to work. Also, when we are sick, they take away our freedom."

The battle is described with Jack London skill, but the ending is tragic. In Jack's stories the white oppressors have the overwhelming strength to win. He accepts this as inevitable, though history is refuting this today.

Jack's own ending was tragic. As a boy oyster pirate he tried to show his manhood by matching drink for drink with seasoned waterfront toppers. The habit clung to him. He fought it during his most active socialist years, but it deepened later, and his friend Frank Strawn-Hamilton was distressed. "I saw him take more than 30 drinks in one day," Frank told me. "He was never intoxicated, but drink was ruining his health and his depression was growing."

But liquor wasn't the only problem. Jack was always in debt. Some of his income still went to the socialist cause, but more went into entertaining friends and beautifying his ranch. His writing and his political activity suffered under this pressure. Symptoms of the white supremacy virus became more frequent, and his socialist comrades did little to help him. The Party had no immediate program to help the oppressed minorities—only the future one of socialism. And it did almost nothing to halt the scores of lynchings taking place yearly.

Meanwhile, middle-class leaders were swinging the Socialist Party further to the Right, and Jack voiced his objections to it in *The Western Comrade* in 1915. "I still believe," he said, "that Socialists should strive to eliminate the capitalist class and wipe away the private ownership of mines, mills, factories, railroads and other social

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PAUL KREHBIEL

Class Struggle and the American Revolution

The American Revolution opened a new stage in the worldwide transformation from feudalism to capitalism. For the first time, an anti-colonial revolution succeeded in winning a victory for capitalist economic development in one country. Without feudal fetters, American free enterprise made tremendous advances economically, while institutionalizing broad democratic rights as a necessary part of the overall process.

Yet the victory of capitalism is a double-edged sword. Its very process of development destroys feudalism on the one hand, while simultaneously creating a new class destined to replace it, on the other—the modern proletariat.

Class struggle is the moving force of history, and it existed in America before, during and after the Revolution. In the revolutionary period, class struggle took place on two levels.

The first level saw the young merchants, employers of labor and diverse sections of the working people pitted against British colonialism and local aristocratic elements. While both sides attempted to enlist the support of the masses—the farmers, mechanics (workers), Blacks (slave and free), and Native Americans, the interests of the workers and

farmers lay with the national liberation movement. As capitalism developed, the growing modern working class would be a significant force in the fight to win democratic rights for Blacks and Native Americans.

The second level existed simultaneously with the first, and saw all working masses and oppressed peoples on one side in a struggle against the employers and large property-owning classes as a whole.

While the American revolutionaries did not inherit a repressive and confining feudal system, as their European counterparts did, aristocratic elements in the New World attempted to preserve some of the feudal and semi-feudal features prevalent during the colonial period.

Many people came to America as indentured servants. They were required to work on a master's land for five to seven years as payment for their transportation from Europe. This indenture placed these people in a position similar to serfs under feudalism. Without freedom of movement or democratic rights, they were at the mercy of their masters. Yet after the period of indenture was up, they would become wage laborers or inde-

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pendent small producers, freely going where wages or the market was the best.

Thus, as early as the 1660s, slavery was instituted as a way to keep a permanent source of cheap labor available. Philip S. Foner wrote in the *History of the Labor Movement in the United States* (Volume I, p. 18):

On the tobacco, rice, and indigo plantations of the South (cotton and sugar did not become important until about a half-century later), slavery displaced the indenture system fairly early. Planters discovered that a slave—a worker for life, whose children became the property of the master—was a more profitable investment than a servant who left after his period of indenture was up . . . Slave maintenance was less than half that of the indentured servant, a fact that made slavery a labor system desirable to both southern planters and northern merchants.

The false ideology of racism was developed to justify the enslavement of black Africans, since it was not possible to enslave the entire working population. Many farmers, workers and artisans opposed slavery, and actively joined the movements to crush this vicious institution.

Struggles also took place over slavery among the young, aspiring bourgeois class. Thomas Jefferson, a slaveholder himself, fought for the inclusion of a section in the Declaration of Independence condemning slavery. Under the "repeated injuries and usurpations" committed by England through an appointed governor, Jefferson included in his original draft of the Declaration

the following:

He (the British governor) has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, captivating and carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere, or to incur miserable death in their transportation thither. This piratical warfare, the opprobrium of INFIDEL powers, is the warfare of the CHRISTIAN king of Great Britain. Determined to keep a market where MEN should be bought and sold, he has prostituted his negative for suppressing every legislative attempt to prohibit or to restrain this execrable commerce. And that this assemblage of horrors might want no fact of distinguished die, he is now exciting those very people to rise in arms among us, and to purchase that liberty of which he deprived them, by murdering the people on whom he also obtruded them: thus paying off former crimes committed against the LIBERTIES of one people, with crimes against the LIVES of another. (John Somerville and Ronald Santori, eds., *Social and Political Philosophy*, Anchor Books, Garden City, New York, 1963, p. 263.)

This clause was struck out and Jefferson explains why:

The clause too, reprobating the enslaving of the inhabitants of Africa, was struck out in complaisance to South Carolina and Georgia, who had never attempted to restrain the importation of slaves, and who, on the contrary, still wished to continue it. Our Northern brethren also, I believe, felt a little tender under those censures; for though their people had very few slaves themselves, yet they had been considerable carriers of them to others. (*Ibid.*, p. 239.)

We see here the strategy of British imperialism. At first England dominated the colonies and participated in the vicious slave-trade to further exploit a source of cheap labor and raw materials. When the American colonists made their bid for independence, the British attempted to pit one section of the exploited population against another section in order to divide and reverse the national liberation movement. According to William Z. Foster, in his *The Negro People in American History*, there were 500,000 African-Americans out of three and a half million people. This was approximately one in every seven, of which nine-tenths were slaves.

The greatest weakness of the American Revolution was that it failed to abolish slavery. The struggle between feudal relations and capitalist relations was reflected in the political arena and legal structures. Broad discussion ensued over whether to include Blacks in the population figures in order to set the number of representatives to be elected from each state to the House of Representatives. In the *Federalist*, No. 54, written by Hamilton or Madison, and published on February 15, 1788, this issue is addressed:

... But does it follow ... that slaves ought to be included in the numerical rule of representation? Slaves are considered as property, not as persons ... But we must deny the fact that slaves are considered merely as property, and in no respect whatever as persons: being considered by our laws, in some

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respects as persons, and in other respects as property. In being compelled to labor, not for himself, but for a master; in being vendible by one master to another master; and in being subject at all times to be restrained in his liberty and chastised in his body, by the capricious will of another,—the slave may appear to be degraded from the human rank, and classed with those irrational animals which fall under the legal denomination of property. In being protected, on the one hand, in his life and in his limbs, against the violence of others, even the master of his labor and his ability; and being punishable himself for all violence committed against others—the slave is no less evidently regarded by the law as a member of society, not as part of the irrational creation; as a moral person, not as a mere article of property. The Federal Constitution, therefore, decides with great propriety on the case of our slaves, when it views them in the mixed character of persons and of property. (*Ibid.*, p. 355.)

The slave is bound by law to his master, just as feudal property is, but can be sold from one master to another as a commodity. The American bourgeoisie attempted to institutionalize the most advantageous features, from their point of view, of feudalism and capitalism. Without any bourgeois democratic rights, the slave was expected to assume a moral responsibility for his behavior with regard to the rights of others. Black people were regarded as rational human beings when the master wanted to punish them, but were treated as property all other times. The young capitalists had the best of two worlds—control over the

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political and economic system of free enterprise, while maintaining a cheap source of labor that was without the weapons of democratic rights.

Slave revolts took place from the time slavery was introduced in the mid-1600s and, according to Herbert Aptheker, in his *American Negro Slave Revolts*, continued unabated for centuries. In 1663, Aptheker reports, white indentured servants and Black slaves in Virginia plotted their escape. One person informed and the plot was foiled, resulting in the "display of several bloody heads from local chimney tops."

Throughout the historical development of capitalism in America, before and after the Revolution, the class struggle embraced all sectors of the working masses and peoples. Small farmers, mechanics (workers), small commodity producers, Blacks and Indians continually fought for their own special interests against the large property-owning classes.

The poor of Europe came to America to escape political oppression and economic exploitation. Philip Foner writes in his *History of the Labor Movement in the United States*:

Probably half the immigrants to Colonial America were indentured servants. By 1770, a quarter of a million had entered America, of whom more than a hundred thousand were victims of kidnapping or prisoners sentenced to service. By this time between three to four thousand Negro slaves were being imported annually into South Carolina alone ... (*Op. cit.*, p. 18.)

English manufacturers and

businessmen carried news about the paradise in America. Foner explains:

(The) English merchant capitalists, who looked forward to America as a source of great profits ... (found that) whatever wealth there was in the new world would have to come from the hard labor of mining, cutting down forests, planting and harvesting crops, and constructing buildings, roads and bridges. (*Op. cit.*, p. 13.)

Staughton Lynd in his *Class Conflict, Slavery and the United States Constitution* (Bobbs-Merrill, 1967, p. 8) notes that many whites worked in semi-feudal conditions as tenant farmers on large estates. Lynd writes that they were bound to "leases requiring grain to be ground at the lord's mill, the annual payment of certain 'fat hens' and the yearly performance of work on the lord's land with cart and team."

In the 1750's, tenant farmers living near the Massachusetts border were hit with high rents which they couldn't pay. They petitioned the Massachusetts legislature to lower the rents, but were refused. When attempts were made to evict them, they armed themselves and resisted.

In 1766, 2,000 armed tenant farmers freed other farmers from a jail in Poughkeepsie, and marched on New York City. They were only stopped after being bombarded with canon fire by the authorities.

The combination of class warfare by tenant farmers and other working people, and the national struggle for independence produced some of the most progres-

sive and democratic advances of the revolutionary period.

Tens of thousands of acres of land were taken from Loyalists, many of whom were semi-feudal aristocrats, and were turned over for public sale. Loyalist lands were sequestered by the revolutionary forces in 1777, were confiscated in 1779, and were sold to the public in 1780.

Four hundred and one small farmers and tenants bought 455 small lots in southern Dutchess County in New York State according to Lynd, attesting to the broad democratic nature of the land reform. Almost half the land was bought by tenants who had already taken it over. Feudal relations were dealt a strong blow here; but within the next decade many of the small land owners lost their land to wealthier property-owners.

In some cases, tenants suffered under very severe conditions, while their landowners lived in ease. On the Livingstone manor near the Hudson River, tenant farmers ate molasses and rice, bought at the manor store, while the Livingstone family enjoyed imported delicacies such as oysters, figs and olives.

The oppressive conditions and economic bondage of the tenants forced many into conflict with their landlords, regardless of the side their masters took in the revolutionary war. Even though the Livingstones were for independence from Britain, 500 of their tenants took up arms in 1777 and supported Britain in waging war against the manor in hopes of winning freedom.

Here again, British imperialism took advantage of the class divisions that they themselves helped create to divide and weaken the American colonies. In Dutchess county, the tenants also fought class battles with their landlords, though here they directly aided the revolution since their landlords were Loyalists. Yet, the interests of the tenants could be improved only by independence for the colonies.

While 80-90 per cent of the Americans were farmers, a growing number were finding employment in the towns as "mechanics," workers and craftsmen.

While there were some economic actions by the workers against their employers, the mechanics also recognized and helped build the independence movement, sometimes beyond the expectations of the merchants and business owners. Foner writes:

By the latter part of 1765 the conduct of the struggle against Great Britain was no longer entirely in the hands of conservative merchants and planters who had hitherto dominated the political life of Colonial America. The mechanics and workingmen of the larger towns had formed their own militant organizations which thrust aside hesitant conservatives, prodded those who wished to move more slowly, and in countless ways pushed the Revolution forward until British rule was overthrown in a revolutionary war. Sometimes they called themselves "Regulators"; . . . Usually they were known as the "Sons of Liberty." (*Op. cit.*, p. 25.)

The Sons of Liberty combined workers with merchants and professional groups in a revolution-

ary organization for national independence. In some colonies, the artisans and mechanics in the Sons of Liberty tried to forge an alliance with farmers in the rural areas. In Pennsylvania they succeeded, though in New York they did not, even though the radical farmers were willing to cooperate, according to Foner. Women formed the Daughters of Liberty and organized boycotts of British goods.

In 1773, the colonial merchants formed the Committee of Fifty-One to plan the course of the revolution. The excluded workers immediately set up their own organization, the Committee of Mechanics, which included some of the workers and artisans from the Sons of Liberty.

The Committee of Merchants made plans for the First Constitutional Convention, and nominated delegates from their organization only.

Even though excluded from having representatives at the Convention, the revolutionary Committee of Mechanics showed a very high political consciousness by supporting its work while pressing for representation in political governing bodies. The Committee of Mechanics was so strong that it assumed government responsibilities in various localities. Lynd writes about New York state:

In the climactic spring of 1776, the Committee of Mechanics functioned as the most popular link in the chain of ad hoc bodies which had taken over government from the British. Ultimate authority rested with the Committee of Safety

of the New York Provincial Congress. In New York City, the Committee of Inspection held power. The Committee of Mechanics suggested new measures to the higher bodies, ran its own candidates for elections, insisted on the sovereignty of the "people at large." (*Op. cit.*, p. 92.)

As early as 1772, workers formed their own organizations, such as the Patriotic Society of Philadelphia. Two years later they took the name Mechanics Association of Philadelphia and united with small farmers in the countryside to hold a provincial conference. Made up almost entirely of workers and farmers, they produced the "most democratic constitution of that time," according to Foner. (*Op. cit.*, p. 39.) It gave full freedom of speech and religion, called for adequate representation of rural farmers and workers in governing bodies, and allowed all taxpayers to vote and run for office.

By 1775, organizations of workers—printers, shipbuilders, ropemakers, leather workers, bricklayers and others—and organizations of farmers existed throughout the colonies.

Five years earlier, five workers were killed at the Boston Massacre. Immediately, the mechanics formed local militias, collected arms and ammunition, and trained themselves at meetings of the Sons of Liberty.

At Lexington, in 1775, the British troops were engaged in battle by the Minute Men, a patriotic organization of farmers and workers, and at Concord they were met by the militia of the

Sons of Liberty. A Boston mechanic rode to New York to spread the news. Foner writes: "Small shopkeepers, mechanics and working men broke open the city arsenal, seized ammunition and about six hundred muskets which they distributed. Thus armed, the Liberty Boys formed a voluntary corps and assumed government of the city. They took over the customs house and the public stores and unloaded two vessels of material intended for British troops in Boston." (*Ibid.*, p. 41.)

When the revolution broke out, many former slaves fought courageously for a nation that had savagely mistreated them. William Foster quotes a veteran—Dr. Harris—of the battle of Long Island: "Three times in succession they (the Black troops) were attacked with more valor and fury by well-trained, disciplined troops, and three times did they successfully repel the assault, and thus preserved our army from capture." (*Op. cit.*, p. 47.)

American farmers, workers and African descendants saw the advances that independence could bring. At the close of the revolution, some Black slaves had won their freedom, and the farmers and mechanics won some important weapons for further struggle—democratic rights.

Yet, for many working people, their general condition did not immediately improve. They had helped win independence for the young capitalist class, and while removing one master, now found themselves with another. Yet, the

victory of the American merchants was also a victory for the masses of working people. Independence freed America from restrictions on production, trade and growth, which now proceeded rapidly. This was a prerequisite for the industrial revolution and the development of the modern working class in America.

After the revolution the ruling capitalist class showed their true interests by returning confiscated land to Tory businessmen in order to create wage-workers for capitalist economic growth.

The Independent Gazette of January 29, 1784, reported that the Committee of Mechanics pronounced "particular anathemas on Alexander Hamilton for giving legal aid to the Tory merchants who had 'fattened' on the 'spoils' of War." (Lynd, *op. cit.*, p. 102.). The class-consciousness of the American working people is revealed: capitalism has no country, but only a common interest in making private profits, yet the democratic rights won in the course of the Revolution are important weapons in the hands of the emerging working-class.

After the Revolution, workers continued to build associations to improve their conditions of work and wages. Foner notes that, "In 1778 the journeymen printers in New York combined and demanded an increase in wages." (Foner, *op. cit.*, p. 69-70.)

Journeymen printers in Philadelphia struck for a dollar a day in 1786 and won. The first permanent union was formed by shoemakers in Philadelphia in

1792 after years of temporary associations. Foner explains that "by 1810 permanent organizations of shoemakers and printers existed in Philadelphia, New York, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Boston, Washington, and New Orleans." (*Ibid.*, p. 72.)

These unions and class actions occurred because of the severe conditions in which many American workers found themselves.

The *New York Daily Advertiser* of January 13, 1791, reported: "many of our small tradesmen, cartmen, day laborers and others, dwell upon the borders of poverty and live from hand to mouth."

Foner explains their fightback: "Six hundred New York journeymen appealed for public relief in

1797 because they were 'in want of sufficient fire and feed' to maintain themselves and their families. They complained that while prices had risen 50 per cent since the Revolution, wages had remained stationary." (*Ibid.*, p. 66.)

These revolutionary American workers, farmers, Blacks and Native Americans made decisive and historic contributions to the birth of our nation. All succeeding movements that fought for the interests of the working class—the trade unions, political workers' organizations, defense committees and others—can proudly trace their history to the courageous working people who helped found our nation in the heat of class struggle.

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