

THE SOCIALIST PRESS: A TOOL OF REACTION

By WILLIAM Z. FOSTER

WITH the drift of the socialist party to the right, the socialist press, both party and trade union, has greatly degenerated. The pro-war group of socialists who quit the party, including John Spargo, Chester M. Wright, William English Walling, et al., have sunk into contemptible apologies for every reactionary practice of the dominant A. F. of L. officialdom. The socialist press as a whole is but little better. Such papers as the *Milwaukee Leader* are only a few shades more radical than Hearst's sheets. The party press has abandoned its whole program of opposition to the A. F. of L. machine. It now fights against amalgamation; it accepts the "new wage policy" of the A. F. of L. and the entire scheme of worker-employer cooperation; it is enthusiastic for trade union capitalism; it follows the lead generally of the A. F. of L. reactionaries in the everyday life of the movement. Except for a mild advocacy of the labor party and nationalization of the basic industries, together with a clinging to certain radical phraseology and a soft-peddling on patriotism, the socialist press in many instances is hardly to be distinguished from that of the ultra-reactionaries. It is saturated with corruption.

It is the policy of the A. F. of L. bureaucracy, from Green downwards, to draw into its service wherever possible the slick socialist politicians and writers. The latter are all too willing to serve as such lackeys to the reaction. A case in point is that of Oscar Ameringer. For many years he was a leading socialist journalist, expressing violent criticism of craft unionism and all its works. But he has made his peace with the reaction. He became editor of the *Illinois Miner*, house organ of the notorious Frank Farrington. Many and bitter were the struggles of the *Illinois* miners to wrest their union from this autocrat, who has since admitted being on the payroll of the employers. And one of the greatest of their obstacles was the *Illinois Miner*, which, edited by a "socialist" and defending Farrington's corruption, was sent into the homes of all the miners in the state.

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The New York Jewish *Daily Forward* represents socialist labor journalism at its worst. Founded in 1897, this paper, edited by A. Cahan, has for 30 years exerted a baneful influence upon the ideology and organizations of the Jewish workers. From the beginning its socialism was of the yellowest and its loyalty to party discipline the weakest. It supported the Spanish-American and World Wars in spite of Party decisions to the contrary. It often endorses old party candidates. Its relations with employers are illicit and corruptive. Since its birth it has been an inveterate enemy of the left wing and of all militancy among the workers. It is

bling in the Chicago wheat pit.

"The Great Bear" is in this period. Back of the wild, hectic life of Thane Pardway and his stock market and sex ventures and adventures, there is just a glimpse of the teeming life in this period of American growth. The control of banks, newspapers, widespread corruption and all the visible evils of a system of profit-making in the control of wheat are a part of this picture.

Here again, as in "Sweepings," the robbery of the unorganized exploited farmer and his labor are not considered. Here is a picture of only the other side—the people who put wheat into the mouths of the nation—or took it out of their mouths on the gamble of ever greater profit. These people, their character and their methods, are vivid in presentation.

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"The Great Bear" does not give one the feel of the completeness of even "Sweepings." Both, however, are thoroughly America of the recent past and both are well-written novels far above the junk of the day.



WILLIAM Z. FOSTER.

(As he appeared during the great Steel Strike of 1919.)

the center of all that is reactionary in the Jewish labor movement.

The *Forward* is the backbone of the decadent socialist party in New York. It is dictator of the reactionary union bureaucracy centering in and around the United Hebrew Trades. It bosses the national administrations of the needle unions. It is based upon support from Jewish business interests. Its influence has always been exerted on the side of the conservative wing of the unions. It supported the old United Garment Workers' fakers, and it long boycotted the Amalgamated Clothing Workers. For 10 years the name of Hillman and Schlossberg were taboo in its columns. Only when these surrendered to Cahan did the A. C. W. become a bona-fide labor union to the *Daily Forward*. In the present great struggle in the needle trades this paper supports Sigman, Schachtman, and the other reactionary bureaucrats with all its gigantic resources and with the most unscrupulous means. The rise of the left wing Jewish daily *Freiheit* makes this needle trades fight a life and death affair for the *Forward*.

The *Forward*, with its 135,000 circulation and vast income from advertisements, is a big capitalistic institution. Its profits are enormous, a large share of which go to pay off salaries. Abe Cahan receives \$17,500 and expenses yearly; Vladeck \$15,000 per year. Advertising managers like Schlesinger "earn" as much as \$20,000 per year. On May 9th, 1926, the *Freiheit* published the following analysis of the *Forward* Association stockholders: writers, 37 per cent; employed by the *Forward*, 37 per cent; manufacturers and business men generally, 31 per cent; lawyers, insurance brokers and professionals, 20 per cent; labor leaders, 9 per cent; workers, 3 per cent.

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Repeatedly, in catering to the employers, the *Daily Forward* has been guilty of strike-breaking activities. In 1913, when in the general strike in the New York men's clothing trade the U. G. W. fakers, assisted by the *Forward*, betrayed the strike, masses of workers violently demonstrated against the paper, smashing the windows in the *Forward* building. In 1916 the *Forward* supported Schlesinger in trying to put across a fake agreement in the cloakmakers' strike. Result: a violent demonstration against the *Forward* building, the rejection of the agreement, the continuation of the strike, and the eventual securing of much better terms.

In the great strikes of the New York Furriers and Cloakmakers in 1926, with the very life of the unions at stake, the *Forward*, under the guise of a war against the left wing, openly used its power and influence to drive the workers back to the shops. The *Forward* is a powerful weapon in the hands of the employers against the demands of the needle workers for improved conditions and a real union.

(From "Misleaders of Labor," by William Z. Foster. Published by the Trade Union Educational League, New York.)