

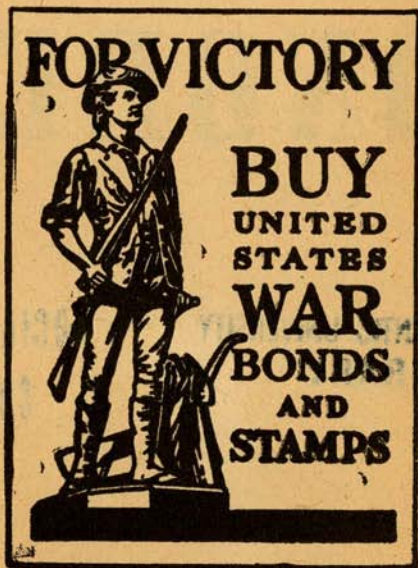
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**THE
PEOPLE
AND THE
CONGRESS**

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WILLIAM Z. FOSTER



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THE PEOPLE AND THE CONGRESS

BY WILLIAM Z. FOSTER

WITH the Red Army dealing the Nazi forces devastating blows and with the British and American victories in Africa, now is the time to smash Hitler and shatter the whole Axis by opening up the long-expected Anglo-American front in Europe. The demand of the Casablanca Roosevelt-Churchill conference for the "unconditional surrender" of the fascist powers and its promises of an all-out offensive point the way to victory and should be whole-heartedly supported by the American people. The great defeat of the Germans at Stalingrad and all along the Eastern front shows that the Nazis can be smashed in 1943. Our whole national war effort, in production, in building our Army, in utilizing our armed forces, should be speeded up to win this now possible speedy victory.

Dangerously enough, however, one of the main obstacles to our winning a quick and complete victory lies with defeatist forces right in our own Congress. It is indeed alarming when, as reported by a London C.B.S. commentator, Nazi broadcasters, fearing the effects in Europe of President Roosevelt's recent Report to Congress on the State of the Union, reassured the German people by stating

that the opposition in Congress will block the realization of the President's militant war program. Such Nazi insolence should indeed wake up the American people and make them rally in overwhelming strength behind the President.

The People's Enemies in Congress

The forces in Congress whom the Nazi broadcasters are counting upon to cripple our national war effort and to defeat the will of our people for victory over Hitler are in the reactionary wings of the Republican and Democratic Parties. Among these are many isolationists, business-as-usual profiteers, politics-as-usual party hacks, open-shoppers, reactionary Southern poll-taxers, etc. The ones among these elements who may want to win the war, nevertheless, put their class and sectional interests ahead of the country's national welfare.

The great danger in the situation is that they are more and more tending to fall under the leadership of the cunning Congressional defeatist group of Munichite appeasers, former America Firsters, and professional red-baiters, prominent among whom are Senators Taft, Wheeler, Nye, Reynolds, Vandenberg, Byrd, and Representatives Fish, Cox, Hoffman, Dies, Rankin, etc. These Congressional defeatists are backed by such sinister figures and forces as Hoover, Coughlin, Lindbergh, Colescott, Pegler, the Hearst-Howard-McCormick-Patterson reptile press, and the ultra-reactionary National Association of Manufacturers.

On some of their anti-war, anti-Administration meas-

ures these elements may command a majority in both Houses of Congress. In any event, sniping at every angle of the Government and its war policy, they will do a great deal of damage if they are not brought to a dead stop by an aroused American people. Their policies can only have the result of weakening our national war effort now and, if the conscious defeatists could have their way, of eventually causing the loss of the war through a negotiated peace, either with Hitler or with some Nazi Darlan.

Such elements are directly hostile to the overwhelming win-the-war spirit of the American people. If the present Congress is infested with so many of them this is in large measure due to the fact that during the recent Congressional elections the people were not sufficiently alert to make a sharp distinction between loyal support of the war and mere lip-service in determining the fitness of candidates. In consequence, considerable numbers of defeatists, as well as of business-as-usual elements, were able to sneak into office by turning the elections around all sorts of unimportant local and secondary questions.

The great menace of the defeatists in Congress and outside is that they carry on their struggle against the war under the pretext that they want to prosecute the war more vigorously than the country's leadership is now doing. Those who are most dangerously moving to hamstring Congress are also the most emphatic in calling this the "Victory" Congress. This was the method of the Lavals and Pétains, who, while labeling themselves good patriots, did everything to confuse the French people and finally to betray France to Hitler.

To win the war quickly and decisively there must be an active policy of the offensive, carried out in the spirit of the Casablanca conference. But an examination in detail of the line of the Wheelers, Tafts, Hearsts, Hoovers, etc., clearly shows that it goes directly against all militant anti-Hitler struggle. In every phase of our war effort, economic and political, the activities of these elements are definitely hindering the mobilization of our nation's full strength and its effective use against the Axis powers. Let us see this in some detail:

The People's Win-the-War Tasks

First: To prosecute a victorious win-the-war offensive it is necessary to support fully the nation's Commander-in-Chief, President Roosevelt, and to strengthen his policies. The war must be directed by the executive branch of the Government, with full labor participation. Congress itself cannot directly run the war, but must confine itself to questions of basic legislation and to active cooperation with the executive war agencies. But the Wheelers and Fishes are trying to do just the opposite of all this. With their theme song of "Hate Roosevelt," they are losing no opportunity to weaken his authority. Under the false slogan of restoring the democratic control by Congress and with a pretense of a fight against bureaucracy, they are interfering with the functioning of the many executive war agencies, by means of needless "investigations," attacks upon the leadership, etc.

The defeatist leaders would even like to take the practical war leadership out of the hands of the President

altogether, as is indicated by their proposed joint Senate-House Committee on the war. It should be clear, however, that any weakening of the executive branch of the Government now, especially by giving an increased influence over the war's direction to the Tafts, Wheelers, Fishes, and Hoffmans, would constitute a major disaster to our national war effort. It would be just what the Nazi broadcasters were hoping for when they announced that Congress would block the President's victory war program.

Second: Another prime necessity for winning the war is the greatest possible national unity. But the line of the Wheelers, Vandenberg, Coxes, Tafts, and other defeatists tends precisely to undermine national unity. The people are systematically cultivating class and sectional differences and strife. Especially dangerous to national unity are the assaults now being initiated against the trade unions by opposition groups in the new Congress, agents of the open-shoppers. Mostly masquerading under the title of the "Farm Bloc," they are planning to destroy the Wagner Labor Relations Act, to ruin the Wages and Hours Act, and abolish the 40-hour week, to cut the heart out of the National War Labor Board, to make strikes illegal, to outlaw the closed shop, to force trade unions to incorporate, and generally, as William Green, President of the A. F. of L., puts it, to "introduce Hitlerian control of labor." This is all in the spirit of the recent statement of J. R. Sprague of the Republican National Committee, that: "It is our job to rid this country of the New Deal. This we shall do."

The adoption of such fascist-like anti-labor legislation as that proposed would throw the country into a turmoil

of struggle and thus weaken our national war effort. Leading in the same direction are the attacks being made by the Southern reactionaries against the Negro people. They defeated the anti-poll-tax bill by a brazen filibuster in the Senate; they have caused the abolition of the F.E.P.C. hearings to investigate Negro discrimination on the railroads, and they have blocked the appointment of that gallant defender of the Negro people, Vito Marcantonio, to the House Judiciary Committee.

Third: A basic necessity for winning the war is to establish a centralized war economy. Production must be thoroughly organized, with central planning and an efficient allocation of contracts, materials and labor; prices and wages must be stabilized, commodities rationed, profits limited, and the tax burden equitably distributed. The Administration, through the War Production Board, War Manpower Commission, Office of Price Administration, etc., has made some progress in this general direction and the Pepper-Tolan-Kilgore Bills, now lying before Congress, indicate the path that should be followed to put our economy on a full war basis.

But powerful opposition elements in Congress would disrupt all this. They would ease up all production controls over employers. They would freeze the workers to their jobs with a National Service Act. They would prevent any limits on profits (see their violent opposition to the \$25,000 a year limit on salaries); they would lift price ceilings at their convenience (that is why they forced out Leon Henderson, head of O.P.A.); they would sabotage the rationing system by exploiting all the people's neces-

sary wartime hardships; they would freeze wages despite rising living costs; they would further load the tax burden upon the workers and other low-income groups by fastening on them Senator Taft's proposed 10 per cent sales tax, while exempting big taxpayers under the Ruml plan. Should this reactionary economic program be adopted by Congress it would disastrously injure the war effort. Already the oppositionists' activities in Congress have done great harm. They are threatening the country with inflation, seriously curtailing production, provoking wide discontent among the already heavily burdened workers, and grievously weakening national unity. All of which effects, so harmful to our fight against the Axis, are just what the Wheelers, Fishes, Nyes, and other defeatists, like the Nazi broadcasters, want.

Fourth: To fight against the fifth column, of which we in this country have a large and flourishing specimen, is fundamental to our winning the war. The experiences of France, Norway, and many other countries should have burned this truth into our minds. Yet the Congressional opposition, instead of fighting the fifth column, is actually giving aid and comfort to it.

For example, the Dies Committee, which ever since its foundation has been protecting such rank fascists and defeatists as Coughlin, of *Social Justice* notoriety, Colescott, head of the K.K.K., and the McCormick and Hearst press, and has also been attacking progressive trade unionists, liberals and Communists, is now asking for another big appropriation with which to carry on its subversive activities. And it will undoubtedly get the money unless there

soon develops a big popular protest. And the defeatist Senators Wheeler and Nye, not to be outdone by Congressman Dies, are now vigorously defending the gang of thirty-three notorious fascists, pro-Hitlerites and war saboteurs recently indicted at the instance of the Department of Justice. It is no exaggeration to say that the most dangerous fifth columnists in the country are now being shielded by powerful groups in Congress—which must make the Nazi broadcasters smile approvingly and hopefully.

Fifth: Still another vital essential for winning the war is to strengthen the bonds of the United Nations and to develop a more unified coalition military strategy. Yet in Congress there are many who are working upon just an opposite course. They are brazenly cultivating anti-British sentiment and sowing suspicions against the U.S.S.R., which means to weaken the heart and core of the United Nations. They would have us slacken our fight against the main fortress of the Axis, Nazi Germany, under the pretext of concentrating our attack against Japan. An especially dangerous move they now have under way also is the Congressional investigation of the operations of the Lend-Lease Law, which expires in a few months. The idea behind this scheme is to convince the American people that their patriotic war sacrifices are caused by the sending of huge quantities of war materials to our Allies, with the hope that such supplies may thereafter be reduced.

Especially is the U.S.S.R. an object of their attack. According to the figures recently published by the O.W.I., however, so far but some 3,200 tanks and 2,600 planes have

been shipped to the U.S.S.R. (many of which were sunk en route). This is the equivalent of only about two weeks of American tank and plane production. Not too much, one would think, to send to a country which is still doing at least ten times as much land fighting as the United States and Great Britain combined, and whose smashing battle against Hitler's armies has saved the world from Nazi domination and has now made victory a possibility in 1943. Another dangerous attack of the defeatists, within and without Congress, against the United Nations is their only thinly disguised isolationist agitation to weaken American participation in the United Nations during the war and to pull the United States out of this coalition in the post-war period.

Congressional Defeatists Menace War Effort

From the foregoing facts, to which others equally alarming could easily be added, it is clear that the situation in Congress is a very dangerous one. There can be no doubt that already those forces fighting against the Administration's policies have seriously slowed up our national war effort. How can the Government do its war job effectively with this opposition tripping it at every step? Undoubtedly, were it not for the sabotage of the war by the Fishes, Wheelers, Tafts, and similar elements in Congress, we would by now, together with Great Britain, have in effect a great second front in Europe, instead of merely our present limited operations in Africa. And if the present plans of such defeatists in Congress go through our

chances of winning the war, quickly and completely, will be greatly endangered. They are trying to head us into a disastrous peace with Hitler.

The great lesson to be learned from all this is that the American people must take an active hand in the situation themselves. They must see to it that their win-the-war will is carried out by Congress and that the destructive schemes of self-seeking defeatists to create a big anti-war bloc in Congress are smashed. They must give the fullest and most emphatic backing to President Roosevelt and to the actively pro-war forces in Congress, and by this active mass support, strengthen the whole war policy of the Government.

What absolutely must be done is to expose the anti-war character of the defeatist maneuvers in Congress and to mobilize the patriotic masses to checkmate them. The many tricky proposals of the opposition, all deeply camouflaged with patriotic phrases, must be shown up as highly injurious to the national war effort. If this exposure is carried out intelligently and persistently, and if the people are kept aware of the danger to our country, they will smash every disruptive scheme of the Tafts, Wheelers, Fishes and other defeatists. But if this exposure is not made constantly, if the defeatists are allowed to obscure the situation then, indeed, our country will be in for a serious time.

All the great masses of the American nation who are determined to win this war—workers, farmers, middle classes, capitalists; men and women; Negroes and whites; Roosevelt Democrats, Willkie Republicans, Labor Party-

ites, Progressives, Communists; people of all parties—must be mobilized to support and vitalize the policies of the President and the win-the-war forces in Congress and to defeat the schemes of anti-war oppositionists.

Labor's Special Responsibilities For Victory

They should fight for the closest solidarity and determined action of the United Nations in the prosecution of the war and in the post-war period; they should be doubly on guard against destructive deals with Quisling traitors; they should beware of all the current slick moves of Hoover, Hearst and Co. toward a negotiated peace; they should demand the extension of our military efforts into a great second front in Europe; they should defeat the attempts of Congressional opposition elements to hamstring the executive branch of the Government; they should demand the passage of the Pepper-Tolan-Kilgore bills for a centralized war economy; they should break up the attacks upon the Negro people and the trade unions as disastrous to national unity and to our war effort; they should demand the liquidation of the Dies Committee and a cessation of members of Congress protecting fifth columnists.

Through mass meetings, demonstrations, delegations, petitions, telegrams, letters and all other forms of mass political activities they should bring pressure to bear upon their Senators and Representatives, to make them understand clearly that they will not stand for any sabotage of this war for our national existence.

In uniting the American people to back up the President and to block the defeatist elements in Congress and outside of it, the trade unions bear a heavy responsibility, one that they can neglect only at their own and our country's peril. There is an imperative need for the A. F. of L., C.I.O. and Railroad Brotherhoods to unite their legislative policies into a common win-the-war program and to organize their many millions of members and families to support the President more actively than ever. It is not enough for the two labor federations to each adopt individual courses of action. The welfare of our nation demands that the trade unions work in unison. The question of labor unity is no longer simply a trade union matter; it is now a national war issue of gravest national importance. Nationally and in every locality, the trade unions should be solidly cooperating together with the farmers and all other sections of the people to insist upon the carrying out of a real war policy by this 78th Congress.

The organized workers are patriotically accepting the burdens of the war. They have taken on more sacrifices than any other section of our civilian population. They have agreed not to strike during the war, waived premium overtime pay for Saturdays and Sundays, given up many hard-won shop conditions. They are working longer hours and at a feverish pace; they are straining their weak financial resources to the utmost in order to meet the war's tax demands, bond purchases, etc.; they are deeply involved in civilian defense and in all other forms of war work. In addition to all these activities, the workers have the supreme task, together with other win-the-war forces,

of uniting all their strength to give the most powerful backing to the Government in the application and strengthening of its war policies. Systematic political work must be done everywhere to solidify national unity, to increase production, to establish price and profits controls and a thorough rationing system, to make the defeatists in Congress understand that the American people will not permit their subversive schemes to go through, if we are to avoid inflation and to develop our maximum war effort against the Axis.

“Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.” Never have the American people had greater need to bear this wise saying in mind than now. We must win this war. Our national existence is at stake. World civilization is threatened by the fascist barbarians. The chances for an early victory are growing brighter and brighter, as Germany, Japan, Italy and their satellite allies are being forced more and more onto the defensive. Nazi Germany can and must be licked in 1943 and thus the backbone of the Axis smashed. We Americans can contribute fully in this world victory for progress only if we prevent the Wheelers, Nyes, Tafts, and other defeatists in Congress from sabotaging our national war effort. We can do our share for victory, only if the patriotic American people, in full political activity, insist that Congress carry out loyally their resolute determination to smash utterly the fascist Axis and all its works.

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