

BEFORE THE FISH COMMITTEE

By WM. Z. FOSTER.

THE Washington hearing of the Fish Committee, to which Comrades Amter, Gannes and I were subpoenaed, was held in the rooms of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, in the Capitol building. The main room of the suite was banked full of big floral pieces, sent to the fascist millionaire Fish by his reactionary admirers, in celebration of his "good work," now about to be crystallized into anti-working class legislation. While millions of unemployed are literally starving, Fish is feted and honored for attempting to drill the workers still deeper into the abyss.

The whole hearing exuded a spirit of blacklist reaction. Fish again gave voice to his program of repressing the growing rebellion of the workers and intensifying the attack in the Soviet Union. He declared that he could be quoted a thousand times as being in favor of a United States national secret police, finger printing registration, and deportation of foreign-born workers, and the breaking of trade relations with the Soviet Union. Bachman of West Virginia immediately solidarized himself with Fish; and he others, by their general conduct in the hearings, showed that they held similar opinions. Moreover, when we charged the Fish Committee with trying to illegalize our Party and Trade Union Unity League, and with aiming to create a war against the Soviet Union, not one of the Committee made the slightest disclaimer, everybody apparently taking it for granted that these objectives of the Committee were manifest on the face of things.

From their line of questioning, it was evident that the Fish Committee in their proposals, will direct a very heavy attack against the foreign born workers. Their fear of these workers was manifest at every step. Fish, Woll and Co., know that foreign born workers form the bulk of the working force in the basic and most strategic industries in this country. They know, furthermore, that these workers, mostly with a background of radicalism or revolutionary training, are the least under the control of capitalist ideology in general and of the A. F. of L. in particular. They also look upon them as the principal source of radicalization in the working class. Consequently, a major phase of their strategy is to drive a wedge between our Party and the foreign born workers. We must, therefore, be keenly alive to the vital significance of the struggle to defend the rights of these workers.

The Fish Committee also showed in various ways a keen fear of our growing strength among the Negroes. Manifestly, instead of considering the Negroes as "reserves of capitalist reaction," as Lovestone does, these fascist capitalists dread them as an element highly dangerous to capitalism generally. Fish inquired carefully regarding our actual strength among the Negroes. Bachman weakly attempted to deny Jim-Crowism in West Virginia; and Eslick, while boasting of lynching in Tennessee, tried in the same breath to prove that Negroes were not disfranchised in his state. We may be sure that still more drastic steps are contemplated to isolate us from the vitally important and deeply discontented masses of Negroes. Eslick clearly indicated what this means in the Bourbon South by the way he licked his chops when we demanded full social, industrial and political equality for Negroes, including the right of intermarriage.

How far the Fish Committee, notorious for its Whalen forgeries, will go in its attempt to develop a trade embargo and eventually war against the Soviet Union, was again illustrated in the person of a Russian kulak witness, fished up from social cesspool for the occasion. He told a blood-curdling yarn about prison life in Murmansk, enough to make Baron Munchausen blush in envy. Prisoners, he said, who were physically unable to do the 8 hours of hard work, were

put out naked in the cold, 50 degrees below zero. Those who refused to work were shot forthwith. Once 2,500 prisoners were sent to a neighboring lumber camp; two months later only 500 survivors returned. He was quite sure the lumber cut came to the United States. He produced fantastic figures as to the number of prisoners, starting at 4,000 for his unit, he mounted easily to 50,000 for the surrounding country, 40,000 for the district, and 5,000,000 altogether. At the last figure, even the Committee members demurred. This was laying it on too thick. Their perjurer had out-Fished Fish! But the capitalist reporters drank up the lurid fable. To such absurd extremes do Fish-Woll and Co. go in the attempt to bar Russian lumber from American markets and to create war sentiment.

The reading of the sharp and incisive Party statement, right in the heart of the imperialist government center, made the Fish Committee reactionaries wince. Manifestly they would have been glad to refute our terrible picture of crisis, unemployment, wage cuts, speed-up, lynching, war preparations, etc. But they were quite unable to do so. They could not even begin an attack upon it. Their approach to the document was that of political illiterates. We had heard that they were such, but the reality surpassed our expectations. Bachman made a feeble effort to refute our figure of 9,000,000 unemployed and to deny our charges of Negro persecution in West Virginia, but he collapsed at once under our further barrage of facts. Likewise, Eslick of Tennessee in his childish attempt to "defend" the "rights" of Negroes in his state.

Our Party's terrific indictment of American injustice went practically unchallenged. Before it, the prosperity shouters had nothing to say. The best they could do was to put to us a few stupid questions about the flag, religion, and violence, for use later in the campaign of terrorism which they hope will protect American imperialism from the awakening masses.

It was highly interesting to watch these fascist defenders of capitalism under the attack of our Party. In addition to the fiery Party statement, Amter, Gannes and I repeatedly charged their entire capitalist system bankruptcy; we demonstrated that the United States is a whole social era behind the Soviet Union; we excoriated capitalism in the South, stating that its social, political, economic and cultural levels can be measured by the Ku Klux Klan, lynching, \$8.00 a week workers, child labor, and the Dayton trial. But there was little response. The old-time militancy of such red-baiters, their violent 100 per cent. hair-trigger defense of American capitalism from even the slightest criticism, was not there. This was not because, relying on terroristic measures, they do not consider any argument necessary. On the contrary, they listened, obviously disturbed. Their attitude reflected the alarm and uncertainty which capitalists the world over feel at the deepening crisis of their own system, while Socialism makes such gigantic strides in the Soviet Union. In their hearts, the Fish Committee were suspecting the validity of their own system and were truly alarmed at the prospect of an awakening working class under the leadership of the Communist Party.

In the next weeks, the Fish Committee will make their recommendations to Congress. Their proposals will incorporate the most extreme forms of the capitalist attack against the American working class and against the Soviet Union. Seeking to create a terrorism that will break the growing resistance of the workers, they will aim at illegalizing the Communist Party and the T. U. U. L. In view of the sharpening economic crisis, the growing radicalization of the workers, and the growing power of our Party, the government, supported by the A. F. of L., will go far in the direction demanded by Fish. The proposals of Fish constitute a menacing danger to the workers and they must be fought with the utmost resolution by every working class organization.