

# THE PLOT FOR DICTATORSHIP BEHIND THE CONSCRIPTION BILL

By Sam Darcy

These are exciting days in Congress—particularly the Senate. The world knows it as a fight over conscription. Every close observer can see that it is a fight over dictatorship.

In fact, General Marshall, Chief of Staff of the U. S. Army, testified in the Senate that they could not possibly absorb the men which even a very limited draft would bring into the army. He stated as their objective the achievement of an army of 500,000 men. Such an army he declared to be in "full war strength" for any immediate purposes. He advised against a larger army on the ground that it would be impossible to train them properly.

Do they need conscription for an army of 500,000 men? The army already has 250,000 men its ranks at the present time. There are an additional 230,000 men in the National Guard which has by recent enactment been transferred into the regular army. This alone gives the army 485,000 men. There are in addition 146,000 men in the Navy. The marines have another 34,000 men. The numerous reserve organizations add several hundred thousand.

A great furor has been made over the fact that full army quota strength is 375,000 and that the army wasn't getting recruits fast enough to make up the difference of 120,000 men. This was a patent falsehood used for purposes of whipping up militarist hysteria which the daily capitalist press calls "patriotism." The truth is that monthly recruiting quotas have all been exceeded. The General Staff set itself the quota for the month of June, for example of 15,000 men. A total of 27,000 volunteered. Out of this the recruiting officers accepted 18,000 men or 3,000 above the quota which they were seeking.

At this rate it is obvious that it will be a very short time before the Army reaches its own stated ob-

jective of full war strength of 500,000 men, without the use of conscription, and not counting the recent acquisition of the National Guard.

The considerable volume of voluntary enlistments was so embarrassing to the demand for conscription that the General Staff of the Army went to great lengths to discourage voluntary enlistment to prove that it was a failure, and provide the argument that the conscription bill which had been introduced had to be passed. Thus the law provides that a recruit joining the army can enlist either for a one-year period or a three-year period at his own option. The General Staff ignored this law. A number of senators sent men into the recruiting stations to try to enlist for a one-year period. They were refused.

**FASCIST PROGRAM**

"First, confer upon the President full wartime power to prepare and defend America.

"Second, universal defense service, so that every citizen may be best trained and placed for the country's defense.

"I mean by that just what I say: Universal service, enacted as soon as the present Congress can enact it, calling to the colors of their country the men of this nation — young men, middle-aged men, and elder men — EVERY ONE OF THEM TO TAKE HIS PLACE WHERE HIS GOVERNMENT MAY JUDGE THAT HE MAY BEST SERVE — in the Army, in a factory, upon a highway, in buildings for or ships, or whatever the defense of this God-blessed country may require.

"Third, confer upon the President power to suspend all rules, regulations, and statutes, including Army, Navy, and departmental seniority regulations, which in his judgment interfere with the maximum speed in the production, transportation, or manufacture of defense materials.

"In addition to this, Mr. President, I have purposely included the power to suspend the wage-hour law, the power to suspend the Walsh-Healy Act, the power to suspend the National Labor Relations Act, the power to suspend any rule, any regulation, any statute which the President thinks, in his wise discretion, will interfere with the vital necessity of this country's army itself at the earliest possible time that conditions permit.

"If more hours of work are required of labor, I favor conferring upon the President power to require whatever number of hours the national emergency may necessitate."

It was reported on the floor of the Senate that Wheeler challenged Pepper in Chicago, saying, "What you want to do is to set up a dictatorship," to which Senator Pepper answered, "Only temporarily." The entire matter was brought to a head by the conscription bill in the Senate.

The bill itself, and the circumstances surrounding its presentation, clearly indicate that it is a bill aimed to establish a dictatorship in the country using the alleged "war threat" as a pretext. At first the Administration thought it could stampede the Senate into adopting it, as it has stamped the mediocre and servile (to Wall St.) House into adopting every other reactionary measure that it wanted.

The Senate, however, under pressure of the almost unanimously hostile public opinion in the country (despite the false Gallup poll and newspaper misrepresentations to the contrary) resisted. The dictatorship forces then sent up a kite in an effort to test which way the wind blew amongst the people. They tested the possibility of winning the masses not on the issue of conscription but on the issue of giving dictatorial powers to Mr. Roosevelt. The kite sent up was in the form of an interview worked out between Senator Pepper and the well-known radio and newspaper commentator Fulton Lewis Jr., who read it over the national networks on Tuesday, Aug. 13. In this broadcast Mr. Lewis Jr., said that he had interviewed Mr. Pepper with reference to the stories of Mr. Pepper's advocacy of a dictatorship. The heart of the matter is contained in the following passages from the broadcast:

"I asked Senator Pepper just what his views are, regardless of whether he said it or not, whether he does believe that the President should be made a temporary dictator.

"He said he believes the United States is facing the greatest crisis, the greatest emergency in its entire history, and he believes that if we are serious in wanting to preserve what we have we should give Mr. Roosevelt full and complete wartime powers, whatever the President thinks is necessary to deal with the situation and to pull us through.

"Senator Pepper said that if democracy is to survive in this country, against dictatorship in Europe, it is necessary for us to have a set-up with a head that has sufficient power to cope with dictatorship on equal terms.

"I asked whether that means that this country would have to give the President the same degree of totalitarian authority that Mr. Hitler has, and once again Senator Pepper answered provisionally. He said he feels it should be power that is given to the President by Congress for the duration of the present emergency only.

"Senator Pepper said the President should have, in his opinion, authority to take over all private industry and all private enterprise and all private endeavor—or any

part of it—any of it that has any connection with national defense.

"I asked him about conscription of labor, whether the President should have the power to draft whatever men he wants, not only for the military services of the Army, but also for work, and Senator Pepper said he believes the President should have that power. He said there is no reason why soldiers should draw \$21 a month, while the worker in some factory is drawing \$20 a day.

"I asked whether that means that the President would have the power to tell all of the workers, all of the employes in factories and plants all over the country, that they shall go to work in this place, at such and such a wage, or over here at some other wage, regardless of what they were getting as private employes, and he

said 'Yes,' he believes the President should have the power to do that."

Pepper's closing words to the interview were that this dictatorship he proposes is "certain to come."

## Rap Hillman For Silence on Draft Bill

The men's clothing chapter of the American Peace Association strongly condemned their union president, Sidney Hillman, of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America and the National Defense Commission for his continued silence on conscription, in a resolution passed unanimously Wednesday night. The chapter went on record against the Burke-Wadsworth Bill as a step toward the "Hitlerization of America" and as "alien to the traditions of the American labor movement."

Electing Ben Levitt and M. Weinberg as delegates to the Chicago Peace Mobilization, the gathering voted to send the resolution to Sidney Hillman and Senator Wheeler for his fight against the draft.

TERRIFIC KICKBACK

The Fulton Lewis Jr. interview over the radio brought a terrific kickback throughout the country. The group around Senator Wheeler in the Senate quickly grasped its significance and the very next day after it appeared it was brought into the Senate debate by those opposing the conscription bill as well as the President's efforts to drag this country into the war.

Senator Pepper was called onto the Senate floor to give an explanation. His explanation turned out to be a reaffirmation of the interview as well as his previous demands to set up a dictatorship in this country. In the course of the debate it became clear that Secretary of War Woodring was squeezed out of the Cabinet because he stood in the way of that army clique which pushed the plan for a dictatorship. Stimson and Knox were taken into the Cabinet because they agreed to become part of the plan for dictatorship. Stimson declared (New York Times, Aug. 1), "Government by persuasion is weaker than government by arbitrary force." The army command favored it because, being themselves hostile to any democratic institutions, they know that the seizure of dictatorial totalitarian power by a small group of politicians as outlined by Senator Pepper with President Roosevelt as a front would make these politicians the prisoners of the army command. That would be the only way the politicians could remain in power.

It was with the aim of achieving these purposes that the army and the Administration introduced the conscription bill.

**CAN'T STAMPEDE PEOPLE**

The army and the Administration have been chagrined by the fact that they could not stampede the bill through. Any delay, any discussion would bring the true nature of the bill to the public view and insure its defeat.

On Aug. 13 General Shedd made a public denunciation of the Congress of the United States for even daring to discuss the bill. This rubbed even Republican Senators the wrong way. Senator Taft of Ohio called General Shedd's public statement "outrageous."

There is very little to stand in the way of dictatorship except an aroused people. In order to placate the Republicans, Senator Pepper in his speech announced that it is not necessary to set aside the 1940 elections. It would make little difference whether Roosevelt was made the dictator or Willkie. That was the one thing, the last thing, the people could decide democratically.

**ONE PLATFORM**

In this Senator Pepper was only stating a fact. In this election we have two candidates but only one political platform. On all the measures introduced into Congress of major character Pennsylvania's Republican Davis voted the same way as Pennsylvania's Democrat Guffey. That is true of the greatest part of Congress. The minority especially the leading and most rapidly growing minority party, the

Communists who are valiantly fighting the program of war and dictatorship are suffering imprisonment, terror and loss of electoral rights.

Serious observers of events in Washington lead one to the inescapable conclusion that the ruling class is determinedly heading for war and dictatorship. They will stop at nothing to achieve that. They will not hesitate to use any method to crush any opposition that it lies within their power to crush. They are covering all of these Hitlerite acts with demagogic anti-Hitler talk. Never did corruption, robbery of our country and debasement of the ideals of our founding fathers by our capitalist rulers, hide as now under the mantle of a false patriotism.

**TRUE PATRIOTISM**

True patriotism, the patriotism of the people, our patriotism, is represented in the deep love which we and all the common people have for this—our country, our urge to keep and extend our democracy and our peace and our urge to move forward to a solution of our economic problems. If despite the great opposition the administration should succeed in enacting this conscription bill into law their victory can prove pyrrhic. In the rapidly disintegrating condition of world capitalism those who are its most stubborn supporters are losing their heads. They ignore the voice of the people. They use deception, trickery, and demagoguery to carry their point. Where that fails they resort to terror. Honest patriotic Americans are being smeared by the Administration and denounced as being with really treacherous open pro-Nazis of the type of Congressman Thorkelson of Montana or the Lindbergh crowd. Men who love peace and hate conscription are being called traitors and fifth columnists.

Don't they ever learn from history? A few hours before his abdication Czar Nicholas issued a proclamation in which he said:

"This war, unprecedented in history, must be continued and brought to a victorious end. Anyone who dreams of peace at the present moment is a traitor to his country."

Did I remember to say—a few hours after this proclamation the Czar could no longer hold on and had to abdicate?

Our ruling class Democratic and Republican should be warned by the hostility of the American people to the conscription bill. Their every act indicates however, that they won't.

Increasing masses of people are looking for new leaders who will fight for peace. The anti-conscription bloc in Congress has the weakness of lacking a positive peace program, only isolation. The Administration has only a pro-war program. They are resorting to the terror of a dictatorship because they feel the people slipping from their hold. Our loyalty to our country, to its people, to our working class, puts upon us the great task and opportunity to provide the leadership for the struggle for peace.



SENATOR BURKE

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### HYPOCRITICAL EXCUSE

The excuse for violating the law given by the Army Generals in the Senate hearings was that a one-year period wasn't sufficient to train a volunteer. How hypocritical this excuse is can be seen from the fact that the very conscription bill which they themselves introduced and are championing calls for only one year's training. All Negroes were rejected. Other men were rejected on the flimsiest pretexts. When Senator Wheeler demanded that the Army officers be called to account for their deliberate violation of the law, Barkley, the spokesman for President Roosevelt, vetoed any such action.

In short, it is clear that the conscription bill was introduced not for purposes of getting additional man power for the army but for other purposes. Our ruling class is determined to prosecute an imperialist war, which is against the interests of the American people. The people are not with them in that. The conscription bill and certain other measures pending before Congress are aimed to set up a dictatorship in the country which will crush the opposition of the people to the impending disaster of our involvement in the war.

Leading the fight for dictatorship is the Roosevelt Administration group headed by Senator Pepper of Florida, aided by the General Staff of the Army. This last seems a paradox, since only a few years ago the officer aristocracy in the army would have not even the smallest part of Mr. Roosevelt. Opposing the Administration drive is a group of embattled Senators of as yet undetermined strength led by Senator Wheeler of Montana, a close friend of John L. Lewis.

The opening gun of the fight was fired several weeks ago in such



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