

The Unions Against Fascism

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THE present value of labor unions, or any other organization, is judged by their relation to the one problem that has been facing us—fascism. The record of labor unions in this struggle—to keep the freedoms we have—is glorious, clean and inspiring. Before the fascists—Hitler, Franco, Petain and others—could come to power, they had to smash the trade unions around them who were their strongest opponents. Smeared as communists, labor leaders were terrorized, jailed and killed. Only in Sweden and England is there left a democratic trade union movement in Europe today. It was the labor party in England that ousted the appeasers and declared war on fascism. In our own country it was the trade unions who supplied President Roosevelt with the political power to stay in office and declare war on fascism. The same clerics and landlords who backed Franco, Petain and the other fascist dictators, have been the loudest and strongest isolationists here, and constitute the strength of an American nationalist fascism. The power of these native fascists has been successfully beaten down by the organized power of the labor unions. Without American help, the entire world, including ourselves, would now have been fascist and freedom would have been lost for centuries.

The way in which we organize and finance the war will decide whether or not we can win the peace. Winning the peace may take longer than winning the war itself. The present emergency may continue in the post-war period for years. If the war is organized and financed by burdening and taxing the poor and selling bonds to the rich, the peace, if not the war, will have already been lost. If the war is organized and financed democratically, then the peace will be also. Not only will we have saved and consolidated our present freedoms and extended them to all mankind, but we will be spiritually and materially equipped to take leadership in organizing the world for freedom.

The most powerful and best organized opposition to undemocratic organizing and financing of the war has come from the labor unions. By the time this article appears in print, all successful agitation for a sales tax will have been killed—wages and prices will have been stabilized—many patents will be on the market to anyone who can pay a nominal royalty (arrived at by compulsory arbitration if necessary)—most natural resources will be allocated—scarce consumer goods will be rationed if necessary—normal income taxes will be higher than ever—corporations will be taxed 100 per cent on all excess incomes, and war workers will receive bonds for all overtime. A common collective task will have been organized and financed as democratically as is possible under the present order.

In these departures from past precedents, the President and Congress are backed by the organized power of the unions. Without their help our President would be powerless. This means of financing and organizing the war will leave us a united and satisfied nation at the end of the war, with no disgruntled mass of people ready to listen to fascist demagogues. We can then go on to win the peace.
