

17. Fighting Fascism Abroad— and At Home

AT the time of Roosevelt's inauguration in 1933 every bank in the country was closed, industry was paralyzed, hundreds of thousands of farmers had lost their farms, the farmers' purchasing power was only 41 per cent of pre-war, and 17,000,000 unemployed were pounding the pavements and highways of our rich country. The New Deal was backed by finance capital to prop up the tottering capitalist system.

The Agricultural Adjustment Administration was organized to restore farm prices by limiting farm production, by plowing under cotton, slaughtering pigs, and holding productive lands idle, while millions went hungry and ragged. While the AAA program of cash benefits brought some relief to the small farmers, the lion's share went to the landlords and banks. Moreover, the destruction of food and fiber was hardly a rational solution.

My work among the miners, textile workers and farmers illustrates, I think, the extent to which our Party was learning to work within the labor movement for the immediate, concrete needs of the workers, farmers and middle class people. I have shown how the passivity—even worse, the sabotage—of the reactionary trade union leaders and their no-strike policy made it necessary for us (for a certain period) to support organization of independent unions. Practically all the important strikes between 1929 and 1933 were carried on by the T.U.U.L. unions.