

What the Bosses' Congress Wants to Do Against the Workers

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I. THE ASWELL BILL.

THERE are at least a dozen bills before congress which aim to limit in some way or other the rights of the foreign-born workers in the United States. Some of these bills are more outspoken than others in their objective to put the unnaturalized worker, in particular, and the foreign-born workers in general, at disadvantage economically and politically.

We herewith begin the first of a series of articles dealing with the most vicious of these bills before the sixty-ninth congress.

The first bill to be analyzed is the one introduced by Congressman Aswell of Louisiana, one of the most backward states in the country.

Mr. Aswell's bill, known as HR-5583, introduced in the house on Dec. 15, 1925, provides "for the registration of aliens, and for other purposes." If some one thinks that the registration of aliens is bad enuf, he will find upon examination that "other purposes" in this bill are even worse.

Will Register Workers!

LET us examine the main features of the Aswell bill. It says: "Every alien who enters the United States on or after the first day of registration as fixed in such proclamation shall be immediately registered in like manner by the immigration officials at the place of entry."

The sixty-ninth congress is as black as any worker would desire a congress not to be. Consequently there is today greater danger than at any time previously that bills of the Aswell type may be carried by congress. This provision means much more than mere registration on the first day of entry for immigrants. This bill provides furthermore that "every alien subject to registration as provided in this act shall, subsequent to his official registration, register once each following calendar year."

What does this mean? This means that of the millions of proletarians in this country, nearly 7,000,000 who are unnaturalized, who are foreign-born workers in this category, will have to register every year. Where can we stop at? What measures will the police and the governmental authorities in general take to insure the carrying out of this decision to register approximately 7,000,000 individuals? If the bill is to mean anything at all in practice, it will have to translate itself into a registration of all workers. Why? The answer is very plain.

The employing class government will have to find some ways of guaranteeing the proper execution of the provisions of this bill. This means in practice that workers would be stopped here and there, and now and then by some government official to ask them for their registration cards. Perhaps the workers might look "foreign" to some government official.

This in itself is already tantamount to registration. We know from our experiences with the military registration during the war that the registration was all-inclusive in effect insofar as the nuisance of being hailed and stopped by government agents was concerned, altho formally the statutes provided for military registration in classifications only of certain sections of the male population.

Of course the worker will have to pay the government an initial fee of \$10 and a subsequent fee annually of \$5 for this great privilege of being catalogued and indexed in the files of their exploiters.

Every Movement of Workers to Be Watched.

BUT there are even worse features than this one in the Aswell bill. Even annual registration is not enuf of a check on the foreign-born worker for our exploiting class government. The bill goes on to provide that:

"Whenever any alien permanently removes from the district in which he is registered, he shall report to the post office of such district and give such information in regard to his movements as may be required by regulation. He shall within two days after arriving in the district to which he removes, report to the post office of such district and likewise give such information as may be required by regulation."

What worse espionage system could one conceive? The workers' movements are thus checked up and followed very closely—and why? There can be only one reason animating the employing class and its government for proposing such methods of limiting the freedom, of stifling the working class. These methods have as their purpose the reduction of the mobility, the robbing of the freedom of the workers in order to cripple these millions of foreign-born and consequently the whole working class in their struggle against the exploiting class, in the struggle for working class rights, for better conditions of life and employment.

Setting Up an Elaborate Espionage System.

HOW elaborate a spy system the government proposes to build up for the capitalists is shown by the provision of the bill which declares that: "Every alien shall, on demand, at any time exhibit his certificate of identification to any agent of the department of labor, to any state, territorial or local police or peace officer, and to any other officers designated by the president."

Under this provision, the government, thru the president, may appoint a huge army of detectives, may empower and very likely will empower, a horde of private detective agents to act as a sort of special set of registrars. But how would these tools of the employing class know who is an alien and who is not, who is a foreign-born worker and who isn't, except by

questioning and examining any worker at all whom they would suspect of being foreign-born? This means, very plainly, the giving of power to a horde of detectives, agents to examine the workers and to control the movements of every worker in the United States, regardless of his nativity.

Even the committee on legislation of the executive council of the American Federation of Labor could sense and did sense the terrible danger to the American working class lurking in bills of this character. In its last report to the fifty-fourth annual convention held at Atlantic City from October 5 to 16, 1925, this declaration was made: "This highly obnoxious measure which would, if enacted into law, mean the adoption by our government of the spying practices of private detective agents."

"The potential danger of the principle embodied in this bill is very great. It has all the elements of a strike-crushing, union-breaking proposal . . ."

As the executive council points out, "Bills of this kind are potentially dangerous because they can be frequently used by hostile interests to the injury and disadvantage of the labor movement."

Upon registering, the foreign-born worker will be compelled to give certain information to the agent of his boss who does the registering. First of all, he will be compelled to make a report of all arrests or convictions in his record. A worker may have been arrested for refusing to obey a notorious injunction. A worker may have been arrested for picketing, he may have been arrested for talking to a scab. A worker may have been arrested for not being able to meet certain bills and thus getting into financial difficulties. All such arrests must be reported to the government. We do not doubt that the use of such information will prove of value to the ruling class and to the exploiters in their efforts to break the backbone of resistance to their wage-slashing and union-smashing campaign.

Preventing Foreign-born Workers From Becoming Citizens.

MR. ASWELL has quite a handsome appetite when it comes to measuring his concern for the welfare of the employing class. He would have every unnaturalized foreign-born worker also provide to the agents of the government "any other information, as specified by regulations, bearing upon the fitness of such aliens for citizenship." Activity in strikes, political activity, participation in any of the more conscious cultural movements of the working class, would of course be considered by the government agents, at the head of whom would be the secretary of labor, as information indicating the lack of fitness of the foreign-born worker registered for American citizenship.

It is clear that this provision of the

law not only declares for registration and cataloguing but provides for the perpetuating of the disadvantageous position in which the foreign-born worker finds himself at some time or other because of his not having been naturalized yet. What chance does an active striker stand of getting his citizenship papers? All of this information gathered by the government would be placed at the disposal of the big bosses. The government agents would welcome and utilize to the fullest extent this opportunity to pry into the lives and conditions of the foreign-born, of the unnaturalized workers, and then to turn over the findings to the class that dominates the government machinery.

The President—Chief Strikebreaker.

TO the president, who is commander-in-chief of the army, this bill gives additional powers when it provides that "Whenever, in the judgement of the president, the interests of the national defense require, he may by proclamation, require all or any part of the aliens required to be registered by this act, to report at such times and places as he shall fix."

The implications of this section of the bill are far more dangerous to the workers than it would appear on the face of a cursory reading of the words. Picture to yourself a strike of coal miners, amongst whom there are thousands of unnaturalized, foreign-born workers. The company is in a tight fix because of the effectiveness of the strike. Some scabs try to approach the coal pits. The workers welcome the scabs in an appropriate manner. The strikers speak to the scabs in the only language they understand. Forthwith the president, under the guise of the demands of national defense, orders the thousands of unnaturalized, of foreign-born workers to move out of the strike zone and to go elsewhere. This would entail the arrest of thousands of workers and would mean the breaking up of the strike.

No more monstrous strike-breaking measure has ever been proposed before congress than this Aswell bill.

Fines and Prisons for the Workers.

SO close a tab do the capitalist agents propose to have on the workers that the bill provides: "Whenever the physical appearance of an alien registered under this act is changed materially, such alien shall report such facts to the post office of the district in which he is registered."

Truly, not even in the worst days of chattel slavery was such a system of limitations, restrictions and barriers worked out for the enslaved.

And woe unto the workers who fail to register. A hundred dollars fine or sixty days' prison or a combination of the two will be the reward awaiting such a worker. Then, should a worker give his information to the government agents in such a way as to enable the latter to call the statements of the registered proletariat

misrepresentation or false, then the unnaturalized working man may be put in the position of having to pay a fine of not more than \$5,000 or being imprisoned for not more than two years, or to be punished by both fine and imprisonment.

A New Deportation Ruse.

FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS are provided as a minimum for the initial expense of enforcing this bill. The crowning infamy of this notorious strikebreaking measure is the section providing that: "Any alien who is convicted of a violation of any provision of this act shall be immediately taken into custody upon the warrant of the secretary of labor and deported."

Could there be devised a more deadly, effective system of union-smashing than that provided in the Aswell bill? Recent years have seen the foreign-born workers participate actively with increasing frequency in strikes and in other struggles of the working class against the exploiters. This bill aims to cripple the weaker section of our working class, which happens to be foreign-born. The capitalists know very well that a blow struck at one section of the working class is a blow at the whole working class, at every section of the working class.

They have picked out the foreign-born as the ones to attack first in their new frontal onslaught because they figure that the foreign-born workers are the most vulnerable, are the weakest because of language difficulties, because of their lack of knowledge, or rather because of their insufficient knowledge of the customs and conditions of the country.

All Workers Menaced.

THE foreign-born workers are part of the American working class. The native workers will not be fooled by these dastardly maneuvers of the bosses. The answer of the trade unions and the other labor organizations to this campaign of the exploiters will be the formation of big councils for the protection of foreign-born workers thruout the country. The dangers of the Aswell and other bills of this type being enacted into law in this country are very great. There is only one force that can prevent these bills from becoming law. This is the power of the organized working masses, united on a class basis to destroy these efforts of the capitalists to perpetuate and strengthen their hold on the political and economic resources of the country.

Greater efforts than ever should now be made to draw the foreign-born workers who are not yet union members into the labor unions. A more intensive and extensive campaign for uniting the forces of the workers politically is now the order of the day. The American workingmen will show that they know how to handle all of these plans for establishing detective agency government in the United States.