EXPOSING FORCED LABOR

By MICKEY MILTON

At secret conferences in Washington offices, behind locked doors of incorporated “youth” organizations, in private conversations in Park Avenue living rooms, at expensive dinners in swanky socialite clubs, they are scheming to put all young non-conscription men and all young women into forced labor camps on the Hitler model.

Who are “they”? “They” are Franklin D. Roosevelt, President of the United States; Eleanor Roosevelt; a host of officials in government departments; ex-senior “youth leaders” like Joseph Lash, Robert Spivack, Irwin Ross and Robert Lane; distinguished educators like President Gideon of Brooklyn College and Seymour of Yale; prominent “liberals” like Dorothy Thompson and Lewis Mumford; and Wall Street representatives such as Elliot Pratt and Ingrid Warburg.

Perfecting the technique of putting over military conscription on the American people—the technique of faking spontaneous “popular” movements to make it appear that the people themselves were demanding to be conscripted—this crew has been working for months to develop a streamlined publicity and organizational apparatus that will herd the nation’s young people into forced labor camps.

It was back in June of this year that the first sign of this fascist-like movement appeared. “F. D. TO CALL FOR FORCED TRAINING OF EVERY YOUTH!” screamed the headline in the NY Mirror on June 18. At a press conference that afternoon the President had revealed to the country that he was:

Imitating the Fuehrer

“preparing a sweeping proposal for universal compulsory Government service—the boy-s-and possibly girls—which would be delivered to Congress in three to six weeks . . . Such training will be for a year’s duration and probably will apply to youths between 18 and 20 from every walk of life.” Under the Roosevelt plan, said the NY Daily News, “the nation’s young men and women would stand solidly as a disciplined, non-combatant army behind the nation’s armed strength . . . Obviously taking a leaf out of Hitler’s preparedness book . . . FDR frankly offered his plan as a cure for the present tendency of our youth to drift towards ‘isms.’

But youth, labor and progressive forces recognized this Hitler technique. Under their storm of protest, Roosevelt shelved his plans for labor battalions, at least until the elections would be over. The ball was passed to Colonel Adler of the NY Times. This brass-hat publicistcornered the country’s newspapers through their Wall Street control and hysteria-bitten correspondents went through the Burke-Wadsworth hill.

“Right To Work”

This, then, is what Roosevelt meant by his declaration of youth’s “right to work” in his election campaign speech. Not decent jobs at decent wages, but Hitler-like forced labor.

Part of Roosevelt’s plan had already been achieved. The bill had originally embraced all men between 18 and 65. Compromise with public wrath had narrowed its scope. Now other means must be found to regiment the rest of the people. Using the pretext of fighting Hitler to Hitlerize America, youth especially must be numbered and scabbered for the greater profit of big business and spied upon day and night for any signs of “isms.”

Forced labor camps would do the job. By enacting legislation or by administrative decree to set up labor camps throughout the country and obliging all young men and women to serve in them two things necessary to the successful functioning of an imperialistic war machine would be secured. A source of cheap labor for industry would be tied up in barbed wire. And any youthful resentment against America’s going to war could be quietly and effectively stamped out.

So tearing that leaf out of Hitler’s preparedness book, the Administration backers and stooges have set to work faking a public clamor for forced labor camps. Remember—the government wouldn’t need legislation to force youth into labor camps if youth could choose between decent jobs and the miserable unemployment it now has.

The pattern for the program government labor camps was right at hand. In 1938 Roosevelt had established the Civilian Conservation Corps. Two years later the American Youth Commission, financed by Rockefeller funds, with the wholehearted support of federal officials, began a comprehensive study of the camps to ascertain whether their program would merit continued, modification, or enlargement. Feeling that an inquiry into the youth labor camps of European countries would help the CCC study, the Commission sent Kenneth Holland, the director of that study, abroad to visit them. In 1938, after working in these foreign camps, Holland had returned to become First Corps Area Educational Adviser in the CCC. In 1938 he went back to Europe. His report was published last year under the title, Youth in European Labor Camps. It is check full of details that point a close parallel between the transformation of the pre-Hitler German labor camp movement into the Hitler youth labor corps of today and the Administration’s drive to remake the CCC into its Nazi model.

The CCC, however, does not provide the only American example of labor camps. Also under government control are the some 600 Resident Centers organized by the National Youth Administration. Offering a slight measure of occupational training and financial aid to needy youth, they are readily transformed into actual labor camps. Recent government press releases have announced their rapid integration with the national defense program. But for the purpose of whipping into line a “popular” movement for forced labor camps, other sponsors besides the government could render much better service. With no apparent ties to either the government or business, private work camps might, if properly handled, provide the front for the brains and money behind the forced labor camp movement and give the whole thing the innocent air of spontaneity required.

“Work Camps for America”

It wasn’t hard to discover private work camps. For several years the Friends Service Committee and Progressive Education Association have operated work camps in every part of the country. In August, 1939 one such as these, Work Camp for Democracy, drew a number of young Americans and refugee Europeans to it on the shore of the Hudson near Poughkeepsie.

This work camp, apparently, was one of those to be dipped into acting as the spearhead of the new movement for governmental forced labor camps. Among its membership, its organization and its sponsors were people who could either be deliberately and knowingly used or fooled into fronting for forces that had purposes different from those for which the camp was founded. It “happened” that Robert Lane, class of ’39, Harvard, who deserted the American Student Union was one of the WCFD campers. He was elected chairman
of the camp’s steering committee. During that month, Kenneth Holland of the American Youth Commission and author of its European Labor Camp study, visited the camp together with Lewis Mumford. Liking it for reasons which will become clearer as we go along, Holland and Mumford had the American Youth Commission put Lane on salary for four months. His job was to campaign for a wider adoption of the work camp idea. Not successful, Lane returned to New York after his trial period.

both Negro and labor representation. They won half their goal, getting Mary M. Brown appointed, but no labor person. Kenneth Holland, new Chairman of the Executive Committee, “got Mrs. Roosevelt’s consent” to have her name listed. Dorothy Thompson was also chosen. A bit later, in the February issue of the Ladies Home Journal, Miss Thompson devoted her monthly column to “A Job for Youth.” She began by praise of the institution of voluntary work camps for youth, went on to boost the CCC, discussed the August, 1939 Work Camp for Democracy and added:

“There is nothing in the least undemocratic about the idea of even compulsory work service . . . if all boys and girls in this country were compelled to spend, let us say, three summers of three months each, between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one, on work of national importance, they would pay in some measure for the education and the social security which the community assumes throughout their lives.

Mrs. FDR Chips In

That opinion was echoed a few months later by Mrs. Roosevelt when she wrote for the Aug. 27 issue of Look magazine “My Advice to American Youth.” Asking, “what can you young people do about war?” and adding that “protest marches . . . do little good,” she gave hers and her husband’s answer: “I suggest that all young men and women give one year of their young lives to performing some government service in democratic work camps” . . . She and the President speak for their millionaires munition-manufacturing friends. They would much rather have youth cut out the protest demonstrations and confine themselves to chopping trees or painting houses in snug little forced labor camps.

But still the movement did not flourish. The names and columns of Dorothy Thompson and Eleanor Roosevelt were not enough to draw popular support. As fund-raiser Lane was getting scanty results. There were no signs that work camps had any mass appeal.

So if the work camp idea was ever to spread it must find new allies, new support. In the spring of 1940 Lane began talking to International Student Service about adopting work camps into its program. Lane is also on the executive board of ISS. And after the three work camps of the 1940 summer, Mrs. Elliot Pratt and Ingrid Warburg, both active on WCA’s executive committee, suggested a merger with ISS on the ground that ISS’s superior financial resources could guarantee WCA’s administrative expenses and assure Lane’s salary. Several discussions took place in WCA with some people strongly opposing the merger. On October 22 a dinner featuring Mrs. Roosevelt was given at the exclusive Cosmopolitan Club in New York, for which Mrs. Pratt undertook half the expenses and Miss Warburg secured the reservation. The invitation list read like several pages out of the Social Register and Dunn and Bradstreet. Mrs. Roosevelt praised Work Camps for America, adding that the NYA and CCC had much to learn from them. The Government, she said, considered it an experiment to be watched carefully and perhaps adopted. $2,000 was raised on the spot.

In the first weeks of November WCA and ISS met separately to continue negotiations on the proposed merger. At one ISS meeting, Joseph Lash, darling of the Roosevelt family, and a member of ISS’s board, argued for complete and immediate merger of WCA with ISS. Lash was thereupon elected General Secretary of ISS. Mrs. Pratt moved and had passed a motion that his salary should be $4,000 per year, making Lash the highest-paid “youth leader” in America. Lane, present also as an officer of ISS, at first opposed Lash’s election because of his previous political activities. When Lash assured the meeting that he would keep his mouth shut, the objection was withdrawn.

After this meeting Lash and Lane put their heads together to work out the merger’s details. An executive committee to control the program was picked by them: on it were to be Kenneth Holland, Algernow Black, Elliot Pratt, Elmer Jackson, Professor C. J. Friederich, who is the brains of Henry Luce’s suspicious Council for Democracy, Ingrid Warburg, Walter Kotschnig and Reinhold Niebuhr.

$4,000 For Joe Lash

That’s the story, briefly, of the maneuvers by which the forced labor camps backers hope to take Work Camps for America away from its rank-and-file members and fuse its force and reputation with the thoroughly undemocratic International Student Service. Mrs. Roosevelt holds positions of influence on the boards of both organizations, that ISS is ready and willing to give all aid to the Roosevelt Administration in any steps it decides to take to control America’s progressive anti-war youth can be proved simply by recalling Joe Lash’s recent history in the student movement and noting that he is now the $4,000-a-year general secretary of ISS.

On November 6 the United Press reported that two students at Kansas State College had founded a “nationwide youth organization for the preservation of democracy.” Known as “Democracy’s Volunteers,” the group was endorsed by prominent warmongers, including

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German youth salutes the Fuhrer. Nazi discipline in forced labor camps is what Roosevelt wants for the USA.
Forced Labor Camps (Continued from Page 5)

Lewis Mumford, lecturer and author; Freda Kirchwey, editor of the Nation and Reinhold Niebuhr, professor and dean of the Yale Divinity School, have made a significant contribution to the understanding of the forced labor camps. Their research has shed light on the barbaric conditions and the psychological impact of these camps on the prisoners. Their work has been instrumental in bringing attention to the atrocities committed during World War II.

The establishment of these camps was a direct consequence of the policies of the Nazi regime. The forced labor camps served as a means of exploiting the prisoners for the benefit of the war effort. The conditions in these camps were extremely harsh, with inadequate food, water, and sanitation facilities. The prisoners were subjected to systematic abuse and torture.

The forced labor camps were not only a reflection of the Nazi regime's desire to exert control over its population, but also a testament to the moral decay that had permeated the society. The forced labor camps were a symbol of the dehumanization of the prisoners, as their dignity and humanity were systematically stripped away.

The establishment of the forced labor camps was a clear violation of international law. The United Nations and other international organizations have condemned the forced labor camps and called for their immediate closure. The forced labor camps were dismantled as a result of pressure from the international community, but the aftermath of the atrocities committed during World War II continued to haunt the global community.

In conclusion, the forced labor camps were a dark chapter in human history. Their establishment was a direct consequence of the policies of the Nazi regime, and their closure was a result of international condemnation. The forced labor camps serve as a reminder of the importance of upholding human rights and the need for vigilance against any form of oppression.