NO FORCED LABOR CAMPS FOR AMERICAN YOUTH!
FOREWORD
This little pamphlet is published by the American Student Union as a warning to undergraduates to act quickly in defense of democratic education and peace, lest the enemies of our liberties succeed in their plan to regiment youth and precipitate us again into foreign war. The facts it reveals are by no means new, but their presentation, due to space limitations, of available information on the subject, is new. The questions it asks are vital to the welfare of every student. The campaign it proposes to launch deserves the support of every American student.

DEFEND DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION

A recent report by America's best-known public opinion survey reveals that the American people believe: a) that the educational system is a first-line of defense for American democracy; b) that in many parts of the country large additional expenditures are necessary to provide real educational opportunity for American youth.

But the fact is that enemies of an expanding educational system are utilizing the legitimate desire of the people for defense of our nation in order to slash educational budgets, and vitiate the very principles of liberal education and academic freedom which have made our schools symbols of democratic institutions.

When it gets to the point where a powerful group like the New York State Economic Council can say that attempts to raise educational budgets are "subversive", then it is surely time for students, teachers and all citizens to pay strict attention to the new wave of efforts to destroy American education.

Gideonse, Seymour Propose Work-, Military-Camps

Progressive educators and student groups have long pointed out important weaknesses in college curricula, especially in relation to the fear of some administrators to encourage greater realism in analysis, more accurate portrayal of the situation facing graduates, more direct student participation as citizens in the great social problems facing America. This does not mean that all educators have drawn the correct conclusions.

Dr. Charles Seymour, President of Yale, proposes to solve the problem of overly-academic curriculum, first by the creation of "student armies" in which all undergraduates will undergo compulsory military drill for four months in each year, second by compression of the college course into a three-year "mass production" process.

President Harry D. Gideonse of Brooklyn College proposes to institute a period of compulsory labor-camp service as a degree-requirement. Fearful of having his proposal attacked as "Hitlerite", Dr. Gideonse hastens to add that his conclusion is based upon the "admirable results achieved by the pre-Nazi Weimar Republic's labor-camps."

These proposals are meeting much response among college administra-

trators. In what way will they solve the basic problems of America's young generation? Will they guarantee real jobs to the 4,000,000 unemployed, out-of-school American youth? Will they secure a college education any more easily for that estimated one-half of all college students who are working their way in whole or in part through school? Will they provide this generation with any deeper understanding of the laws of society, the causes and nature of war, the problem of an industrial machine which is working at full blast and yet leaves close to 10,000,000 workers unemployed? Will they help keep America at peace?

The one proposes military camps; the other, presumably, speaks of non-military camps.

Labor-Camps No Solution, Says Expert

Well, let the man who is acclaimed as the foremost American expert on European work-camps speak. Mr. Kenneth Holland, associated with the CCC educational program, was sent to Europe by the American Youth Commission of the American Council on Education. His report states:

"The camps in Germany before Hitler came to power . . . show clearly that caring for youth in camps for a period of time is not a complete solution of the youth problem. Young people must be provided with something more than the temporary type of employment found in a camp. . . ."

". . . these pre-Hitler camps clearly show that . . . they do not solve the problem, by, if after leaving the camps, the young people return to the same communities and are again unemployed." ("Youth in European Labor Camps," p. 289)

Thus, the experience of the pre-Hitler camps in itself is a bold refutation of any claim that work-camp service solves youth's problem. What must be done is not to build more camps—but to make our economy provide more jobs—more decent jobs, at regular wages, under human conditions, more jobs, moreover, in the construction of the very things which the people definitely need—livable houses, better schools, additional recreation centers, rural hospitals—things to make life happier and more secure for the 45,000,000 people living below the safety-line in nutrition, and for all the people.

Labor-Camps Retard Social Progress

But perhaps the finding of jobs for American youth is not the objective. Again refer to Mr. Holland's report:

"The camps in Germany before Hitler also demonstrate that it is possible to utilize the time spent in labor-service as an orientation period, when young people who are thinking of going on to colleges or universities when there is also a surplus of 'intellectuals' may be directed into other types of training programs for other fields of activity."

(Youth in European Labor Camps, p. 289)

Ahah! Here perhaps is the nub of the matter. There has long been a "crackpot" school of thought which flies in the face of all recognized fact by claiming that America's problem is that she has "too many doctors," "too many" engineers, chemists, architects, social scientists, mathematicians, painters, linguists, writers, teachers. . . . Is this the purpose
of the labor-camp proposal: to start from the obvious fact that too many of our trained "intellectuals" cannot make a living out of contributing their knowledge and skills for the welfare of the people—and, instead of proposing to provide jobs and opportunities for them, to drain them off into "other fields", such as manual labor, and to prevent the training by our schools of additional skilled scientific and mental workers?

This will move America nowhere—except backwards. This will not improve our national health, our standard of living, our level of skill in producing the things that make Americans proud of our country. It will only open a drive against these traditional objectives of our educational and democratic governmental systems.

And it was not the pre-Hitler educational system that practiced this labor-camp program, but it was the Nazi-fied Union of German Students which in the Spring of 1934 decided "that labor service should be required of every student before he could matriculate at a university!" And the Nazi educational "theorists" Wilhelm and Graehe who rationalized this program used exactly the same argument as that put forward by Dr. Gideonse: namely, that this tendency to favor manual labor for students, teachers and professional classes grew out of a desire... to "return to the laws of life"; that this represented a revolt against "over-emphasis of the intellect".

Yes, Dr. Gideonse, progressive students agree that college curricula tend too much toward abstraction. The solution is to be found neither in labor-camps nor in modeling curriculum on the dictates of the War Department, as so many administrators today propose. The solution lies in greater consultation with students on the problems of curriculums, where ample suggestions for making education practical, realistic and honest have long been forthcoming.

Yes, Dr. Gideonse, students agree that the college community tends too much toward ivory-towerism and separation from life as it is. The solution is to be found not in labor-camps, but in opening the schools to the great discussions which today perplex the American people, in encouraging rather than penalizing students who wish to participate as citizens in working out these problems, in making the school itself a part of American life.

Labor-Camps Mean Militarization

On three major grounds, then, work-camps fail to make any contribution to the solution of the basic problems of American youth. On the contrary they represent, in their wider application not alone to students but to all young people, a great menace to American democratic tradition, a great force for the militarization of the young generation, a great weapon serviceable in stilling the deep-seated peace sentiment of American youth, a great bludgeon usable against the hard-won gains of the American labor movement in relation to wages, working conditions, seniority and collective bargaining.

Mr. Holland states:

"The labor service in Germany under National Socialism strikingly demonstrates that, however democratic in their origin camps may be, they can be taken over and immediately transformed into effective propaganda institutions for the extremes of authoritarianism." (Ibid.)

Yes, they can be "taken over and transformed"—or they can be set up originally for that purpose.

What did President Roosevelt have in mind when he made the statement reported by Ray Tucker in the Brooklyn Daily Eagle of September 11:

"I am determined to cram American patriotism down the throats of American youth whether they like it or not!"

What was portended in the "youth training" program, originally projected by the President as far back as last June?

"President Roosevelt prepared a youth training bill... to be administered by Mr. Sidney Hillman to provide jobs in national defense for boys and girls aged 16-31. Mr. Roosevelt in a statement in Washington stated that he was dissatisfied with the infiltration of alien 'isms' in the minds of youth, and felt the need for disciplining them and instilling true American patriotism..."

(New York Times, June 19, 1940)

This plan was apparently shelved for the time being in order to get peacetime conscription passed... but shelved only because the storm of opposition it would have provoked would have been even greater than the public opposition to the conscription bill. Shelved, but not abandoned.

With conscription jammed through, the rest of the program is now in order. Even Mrs. Roosevelt, who has rarely been ahead of the Administration in its recent proposals, seems to be forecasting the shadow of coming events:

"... the CCC and NYA should cover every boy and girl coming out of school who is not able to obtain work in private industry or who is not called to service under the selective draft..." (My Day, printed Oct. 31, 1940)

And the type of NYA "coverage" which may be expected is undoubtedly the type which is now developing in the non-student projects—not an agency to provide training and give as much as
Adler Says Women May Be Registered

The national defense program eventually will provide for registration of women who desire to serve their country, in the opinion of Col. Julius Ochs Adler, civilian aid to the Secretary of War.

Col. Adler voiced this belief last night in an address before the New York League of Business and Professional Women at the Woman's City Club where several members protested that no provision for such registration had yet been made.

Col. Adler said the proposal to register women and record their skills and experience had been discussed during the drafting of the Burke-Wadsworth conscientious bill but had been dropped as too drastic.

possible of its appropriation to the workers in the form of wages, thus providing needed purchasing power, but an NYA fast becoming an agency for the production of materials, at miserably low wages and under conditions which do not lead to regular employment.

A New York Times story of November 14 describes how "the War Department intends to make full use of National Youth Administration personnel in various capacities at Army posts throughout the country."

Labor-Camp "Experiment" by F.D.R.

Even now the Administration is "experimenting" with labor-camps. A special article in the Boston Evening Transcript of November 22 is headed.

"HARVARD HIRED MEN ON VERMONT FARMS TEST NEW THEORY OF U.S. YOUTH CAMPS"

The article begins:

"Norwich, Vt.—Plans for an entirely new type of government work-service camp for young men, differing substantially from the CCC program, were disclosed here today."

"The project has been approved by a committee of the National Defense Council . . . it appears reasonably certain that the camp will have the official financial backing of the government."

Enrollees in this "trial balloon", almost all college men, will perform work-service for neighboring towns and communities, at nothing more than CCC pay. The sponsors want to "develop character through hardship . . . " Dorothy Thompson, leading advocate of America's entrance into war, is one of the key sponsors—surely, in view of her political objectives, she cannot expect the boys to remain long in Vermont.

Thus have a couple of college boys been rung in on a scheme which probably most of them are not aware plays directly into the hands of the forced-labor-camp sponsors in America.

For, as always, the loudest proponents of forced-labor-camps will proclaim that they only want voluntary work-camps—at first! That is the obvious publicity technique. That is the same idea which the William Allen White Committee has been using with relative impunity till now. They proposed to send battleships to British—to keep us out of war! They proposed to send flying fortresses to Britain to keep us out of war! Then, bam! They put James B. Conant, president of Harvard, on the radio to reveal that they don't want to keep out of war after all! It is now: Aid to Britain—Short of Nothing! Said Conant: "There are no reservations in our pledge."

Labor-Camp Publicizers

Why then the sudden appearance of a whole crop of organizations operating in the youth field dedicated to publicizing the labor-camp idea?

Why the foundation of "Democracy's Volunteers", an outfit which parades as a "grass roots movement" from the state of Kansas—with a board of sponsors everyone of them a New Yorker known for participation in pro-conscription, pro-war activities?

Why does this organization form "battalions" in the schools and plumb for "government-sponsored" labor-camps?

Why the interlocking directorate between "Democracy's Volunteers" and a former purely-relief organization called "International Student Service", with Prof. Clyde Eagleton, Harvard-ex Irwin Ross, and Prof. Reinhold Niebuhr serving double-duty in both groups?

Why the inordinate haste on the part of International Student Service to take over under the jurisdiction of its own politically-biased Board of Directors, the Work Camps for America, formerly an independent organization with a mild program of promoting summer camps for students?

This reproduction of memo written on November 14 by Robert Lane, secretary of Work Camps for America and member of the ISG board, proves that ISG about a year ago was "a dead organization."

Why the establishment of Joseph P. Lash, pro-conscription and pro-very-short-steps-to-war, who retired from student activities last year as being "too old" to get the college-man's viewpoint, as the new general secretary of ISG? Why is this "dead" organization being revived now—with a conference program, a projected magazine and—work-camps?

What is going on behind the scenes in these newly-created student groups? What is cooking in Washington—in relation to the future of American youth?

Labor-Camps Are Hitler's Way

Forced-labor-camps is becoming the Administration's way out.

Forced-labor-camps was Hitler's way out. Shackling American youth to permanent insecurity, low wages, and denial of civil rights, it will create a huge army of cheap labor with which to undermine the economic standards fought for by the American labor movement. Brutalizing and militarizing American youth, it will create a machine in itself destructive of youth's democratic aspirations and take giant strides toward lining up American youth for entrance into war.

The American student body, characterised most deeply by its desire for peace and democratic progress—the whole American youth movement must stand guard now against any moves in the direction of carrying through this proposal. Young people must put forward more strongly
than ever the path which they themselves have worked out to meet the employment and educational needs of our generation.

The American Youth Act Is The Answer

For five long years there has languished in Congressional committee a bill prepared by America’s youth organizations, called the American Youth Act. Designed to create millions of jobs in home-building, hospital- and school-construction and other socially necessary projects, this bill provides for the payment of a minimum $12 a week wage (contrast with NYA $15 a month) to young workers in its program, and for the payment of a minimum of $.50 an hour to all college students certified as being in need of help to carry on their education. Guaranteeing democratic control through participation of youth, labor, social service and educational organization representatives in its administration, the program provides for strict civilian projects and control. “Build America!” is the aim of the Youth Act.

Federal Aid To Education Is Needed

“Build American Education!” is the aim of the federal-aid-to-education bill which has likewise been ignored by the Administration, even though its provisions for helping poorer states provide more adequate educational facilities and opportunities to youth were based upon a report submitted by a committee of experts appointed by the President himself.

These are the foundation-stones of youth’s program. Without these any defense program for America lacks the first prerequisite of such defense—defense of the opportunities, the standards of living, the prospects for a future for our entire young generation. A program based on armaments production, a program based upon acceptance of the inevitability of war—is not a defense program, for it inevitably means the curtailment of the social gains, the civil rights of the people; inevitably it means the destruction of the very democracy we are allegedly defending through the plunging of our country into another conflict abroad.

For Democracy—For Peace—Join The A.S.U.

American students must state their intentions now—before it is too late! Sign the Statement of Opposition to Forced Labor Camps now being circulated on all campuses. Join and build that campus organization which unites students of all opinions, all faiths in their common desire to defend democratic education, protect American democracy, keep America out of war—the American Student Union.

I want more information on how to oppose Forced-Labor-Camps for American youth.
I apply for membership in the American Student Union and enclose $ .75 annual dues (including $.25 special Academic Defense assessment).
Name .................................................................
School ....................................................................
Address ..................................................................

Send to American Student Union, National Office,
381 Fourth Avenue, New York, N. Y.

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