

BOOK REVIEWS

AN INDISPENSABLE LABOR MANUAL

Review by WILLIAM Z. FOSTER

LABOR FACT BOOK 7. Prepared by *Labor Research Association*. International Publishers, New York. 1945. 208 pp., \$1.60.

The Labor Research Association has made another important contribution to our economic, political and labor literature. Its new *Labor Fact Book 7* is the sort of book every reader of *Political Affairs* will want to add to his library. For there is nothing like it; nothing that so neatly summarizes the major developments and events, the basic facts and figures of the recent period.

The latest volume in this biennial series of valuable handbooks which started in 1931, takes up where the last one left off. It covers the period from early 1943 to the spring of the present year. Its 208 pages are crammed with data that everyone needs in order to understand properly the crucial years of war and the postwar world ahead of us.

L.R.A.'s new book, like its predecessors, not only deals with the conditions of labor and the developments in the labor movement, but covers a wide range of topics of timely interest to the

labor movement as it becomes an increasingly vital factor in our national life. A mere listing of the main chapter headings indicates the broad coverage of the volume.

First comes "The War Economy," packed with condensed information on production, consumer income and expenditures, the profits of the capitalist class, the reserves and surpluses set by the corporations, the dividends and high salaries maintained through the war. Then we have a group of related subjects under the heading of "Postwar Goals and Problems." The section starts out with President Roosevelt's Economic Bill of Rights. It includes all aspects of conversion dealt with to some extent but mainly evaded by the last Congress. It covers all the relevant material needed for an understanding of Federal tax policies and the class distribution of the tax burden. It presents pertinent background material on national product and national income in the light of the recent studies of the U. S. Department of Commerce. Then it gives us related information on government's plans for postwar full employment and public works. For trade, international cartels, and Bretton Woods agreements are among the topics discussed in the same chapter.

But L.R.A. is not content to stop only with the programs that have worked out by business and government experts. It gives due credit to the various reconversion and po-

plans that have come out of serious trade union thinking on the subject. At the end of a chapter on "Labor and the Nation," it summarizes the most advanced of these programs, both the over-all plan of the C.I.O., for example, and the specific programs worked out by particular C.I.O. unions to meet the special conditions in their industry. There are scarcely any union plans of importance that are not given some mention in this section of the book.

Another feature of this chapter is the whole story of the C.I.O. Political Action Committee and its role in the election of last year, along with lists of the main progressives elected to Congress and the votes received by the leading candidates. As in the last *Fact Book*, space is devoted also to presenting labor's role in the war, a picture that has been completely distorted in the capitalist press. Here we find the exact strike record of the unions in this period. We see what organized labor, adhering to its no-strike policy, did on the production front and in the sale of war bonds, in war relief and in countless other ways to bring about victory over the Axis.

Not only is the story of achievement recounted, but the just praise that was accorded labor for its magnificent war record is also recorded quotation by quotation for history to evaluate.

Returning G.I.s also may examine here the true war record of labor after having been so long misled into believing that the unions were loafing or striking on the home front while they were at the battle front. In this connection the revealing section on "Labor Helps the Veterans" is also of unique value for those who would help cement the bonds of unity between la-

bor and the returning servicemen and servicewomen. The *Fact Book* shows that labor has been away out in front in all the various services performed for veterans. No serviceman could have any doubts as to who his real friends are after reading this section of the book.

In the chapter on "Labor Relations and Boards," L.R.A. pulls no punches in sizing up the stalling methods of the National War Labor Board. The book gives the significant rulings and decisions of the Board and shows specifically how these decisions either advanced or retarded the cause of labor and of true economic stabilization in wartime. At the same time, the volume sums up the law-defiers like Montgomery Ward and shows who the saboteurs of national unity and economic stabilization really were.

The chapter on "Labor and Social Conditions" has, like all the other chapters, completely new material supplementing that which appeared in the six previous *Fact Books* and all effectively arranged so that it can be used at a moment's notice by those who want the latest facts on the class distribution of incomes, cost of living, family budgets, wages and wage rates, hours of work, employment and unemployment, industrial accidents, health hazards. One of the most complete sections deals with public health and leads up to the new programs for social security and health insurance. Special sections in this chapter deal also with veterans' benefits, housing, white-collar workers, women workers, Negro workers, poll-tax laws, soldier vote regulations and the F.E.P.C.

Realizing the close relationship and interdependence of the farm and city

worker, the L.R.A. has as usual given ample space in the book to an extensive discussion of the farmers and their programs, their postwar prospects, and the organizations the farmers have established to carry out their goals.

Especially useful tables in the book are those covering the membership of each C.I.O. and A. F. of L. union, as well as a table showing the number of Negroes in various individual unions.

These are only a few of the highlights of this indispensable volume which closes with salient facts on the Latin-American and Canadian labor movements and a report on the new World Trade Union Federation.

We can think of no one recent book that will be of more value to the average trade unionist or active worker in any field of organization. The Labor Research Association is to be congratulated on putting so much information into such a small space. The facts are made to speak for themselves. They should indeed speak directly to readers running into the thousands. No better book of its kind is available in the English language. It should be a best-seller in progressive book stores and trade union literature departments.