

NEW OUTLOOK

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Babbitt & Son Go Red

What progress Communism? Considerable, the writer reports, in the upper brackets of the white collar class, and in the schools of the nation. This article examines the method by which the new recruits are made and poses a challenge to the conservative leaders.

by Martin Sommers

ON a stifling Saturday evening of the current summer what are politely called the exigencies of journalism yanked me from beneath a beach club parasol and left me perspiring aboard a train bound for Manhattan. Beside me, to my surprise, I discovered a successful young corporation lawyer, wearing a hot blue wool suit and a maroon tie. I was surprised because only a few hours before I'd seen him, in white flannels and polo shirt, disporting himself on the club beach sands with his seven-year-old son and four-year-old daughter.

"What brings you to town on a night like this?" I asked him.

"The rally at the Garden," he answered.

The only rally at the Garden, I happened to know, was a mass meeting of Communists to protest Hitler murders. I could not imagine my handsome and scholarly acquaintance, who works for no such firm as Shyster, Flywheel, and Shyster, but gets his \$10,000-to-\$15,000 a year as a "coming-man" in a firm boasting some of the most sonorous and conservative names in America, deserting the cool sands and beautiful people of the beach for a gathering of sweaty, uproarious and tiresome Reds in the sun-baked confines of Madison Square Garden. So I asked him if I had heard him aright.

"Oh, yes," he answered. "You see I'm one of the vice-chairmen, and I've got to be there."

"Well, but, are you a Communist?"

"Yes," the attorney answered lightly, "I've been both a Republican and a Democrat and today I think the only thing you can decently be is a Communist."



The information was indeed pretty shocking. Professionally nobody in the country is more devoted to preservation of the rights and properties of the privileged classes of capitalism than this young lawyer. His job is the conservation of the estates of deceased rugged individuals and the safeguarding of the old-fashioned rights of big corporations. Yet by political faith, in his private life, he

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is a Communist and he makes personal sacrifices for that faith. In addition he risks losing his job and the pleasant fruits which twelve to fifteen years of hard legal labors have harvested for himself, his wife and his children.

Are citizens of that type, with so much to lose, becoming active Communists? I decided to find out. I discovered that some of them are—although at this time the reasons for taking such a step, as advanced by them, are more important than their numbers. But, most important of all, I discovered that a great many of their children, now in schools and colleges, are becoming active Communists because, with the corporation lawyer, they think “the only thing you can decently be is a Communist.”

Now this is no A. Mitchell Palmer scare, nor Hamilton Fish story, nor piece of Red propaganda, since the writer is neither a Fish nor a Red. But it does propose to be a report on an existing condition today in the United States and an opinion on what to do about it.

In recounting my discovery of good citizens and solid Americans turning Communist I do not propose to argue the cases of Corliss Lamont, son of suave Thomas W. Lamont, the distinguished front partner of J. P. Morgan & Co., or Alfred M. Bingham, son of rock-ribbed Republican Hiram Bingham, capitalist and former United States Senator from Connecticut. Recently young Bingham was sentenced to thirty days in jail and young Lamont was arrested at the same time because they joined Communists and strikers in militantly picketing a Jersey City furniture plant. So far as I know they are very good citizens who have turned radical for sincere, intelligent reasons. But if they are they will not be so acknowledged by the public because they are sons of “great men.” The unreasoning public prejudice against sons of rich or “great” men is so violent (It is much easier for a rich man to get into Heaven than it is for his son to get people to take him seriously!) that they are certain to be set down as crackpots or parlor pinks if they show radical tendencies. That is why I am not arguing the case of Bingham or Lamont, although everybody who knows the Lamonts knows Corliss always has been considered far brighter than his brother, Thomas W., Jr., who now is following in the footsteps of Thomas W., Sr., so dutifully.

But I'd like to give you the case of Paul P. Crosbie, of Sunnyside Gardens, Queens, New York City (you'll find his name in the 'phone book), solid citizen, insurance broker, good husband, worthy father and patriot who has proved his love of this country. I'm sure you'll agree, when you



know Mr. Crosbie of Sunnyside Gardens, that nobody can call him a crackpot. He is a composite photograph of the best type of American citizen and his deeds have proved his devotion to the very noblest principles of what Republicans and Democrats call Americanism in their Fourth of July speeches. Yet Mr. Crosbie, of Sunnyside Gardens, recently became a red, red Com-

munist, is crusading for the Communist party now and intends to fight it out on that front throughout his lifetime, no matter what the cost.

Crosbie was born a minister's son in rural Wisconsin and he knew hard farm work in his youth. He worked his way through Lake Forest Academy, outside Chicago, and went on to Harvard, where Franklin Delano Roosevelt was a fellow student at the time. They studied under the best set of savants in Harvard's illustrious history. After graduation from Harvard young Crosbie, a lover of

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the soil, tried dry farming for a few years in Western Kansas and fared no better or worse than most of the dry farmers in the Western Kansas of that day. He came to New York City flat broke in 1909, got a job in the insurance business and worked so hard that he became quite quickly a prosperous broker.

Along came the World War. Crosbie believed his country menaced. At thirty-six, the father of five children, he enlisted in the Army. He was graduated a second lieutenant from the First Officers' Training Camp at Fort Myer, Va., assigned to the 313th Field Artillery, and sent to the front. He won promotion to first lieutenant through gallantry in leading his men at San Mihiel and in the Meuse-Argonne, where he was under fire for fifty-four consecutive days. When the war was over he returned to insurance with redoubled vigor.

Crosbie prospered moderately but substantially. He bought a nice house in country-like Sunnyside Gardens. He was known as an agreeable golfing companion, a better-than-average contract bridge player, and a sporting trout fisherman. He also was a leader in American Legion affairs, the Queens Parent-Teacher Association and the community social life. His insurance brokerage business at 130 William Street was good and he was acquiring a fortune which would give him more time for trout fishing as he grew older.

Along about the time the matter of how this country was being governed began to be of economic importance to the people in it—in short, after the Wall Street crash—Crosbie, in common with a great many other business men, began to take an interest in politics. He saw abuses clearly and sought to correct them through working from within the dominant party. He was an able Democratic district captain in Queens for four years, trying to be very practical about correcting evils. At fifty-three, Crosbie appeared to be sailing the even course of his type of American.

You can imagine the surprise, then, of the many good friends and neighbors of Paul P. Crosbie, sound business man, fine citizen, when they picked up their newspapers a few weeks ago and discovered that he had been arrested for flourishing a Soviet banner in a Communists' parade! Surely there was some mistake. But no, Crosbie blandly admitted he was Unit Organizer of the Communist party in Long Island City, Queens!

What had happened to Crosbie? Let Crosbie tell it.

"Nobody was more enthusiastic over the Roosevelt Administration than I," he told me over the luncheon table. "I actually sat at the radio and thrilled from the top of my head to my toes over President Roosevelt's inaugural address.

"But by September of 1933 I had become convinced that the Roosevelt NRA program was designed to strengthen the hold of financed capital at the expense of the great majority of the producers and consumers. I became convinced that the two existing parties are hopeless because both parties are organized to serve the capitalist class—the Democrats as much as the Republicans ever thought of being.

"My mind, of course, had been closed to such words as Communism and Bolshevism. Like other Americans I looked upon Lenin and Stalin as the worst forms of dictators. In looking about for some political faith my mind and conscience would permit me to accept I first examined the program of the Socialist Party. After careful study I came to the conclusion that it was hopelessly lacking in vitality.

"My first contact came through looking into a New York Telephone Directory. I found the Communists had headquarters. I visited them. My inquiry about Communism from a young lady at the information desk seemed to arouse suspicion until I convinced her that I merely

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wished to study the principles of the program of the Communist party. She consented to recommend certain reading for me. A few days later I returned, this time with a request that I be introduced to some one who could answer certain questions that had developed out of my reading. The fact that I soon made application to join the Communist party is evidence that my questions were answered to my satisfaction."



What were the reactions of Crosbie's relatives, friends and neighbors when they discovered that he was a parading, banner-waving Red, getting himself arrested in Communist street demonstrations?

Reactions exhibited a very sharp contrast. He showed me a letter from a brother, to whom he had been very close throughout life. The brother wrote seriously and compassionately, expressing the belief that worry over the financial situation had upset Crosbie's mind. The brother earnestly urged that Crosbie go to the New York Medical Center at once and have his mind thoroughly examined. First Crosbie laughed, and then he felt very sorry for his brother. A contrasting letter came from one of the greatest of our American educators, a man whose name is known and spoken in universities around the world. The educator heartily congratulated Crosbie and said that, if such a thing were possible, his respect for him had been infinitely increased by the stand he had taken.



I suspected that his fellow insurance men, with whom Crosbie does business daily from his downtown New York offices, might have been moved to condemn him. He told me this was not the case. Some of them came to him and expressed their admiration for his honest stand for the principles he had adopted. One, an extraordinarily successful insurance man, said:

"You did the right thing—I wish I could see my way clear to do it. The change is sure to come."

And what about Communist Crosbie's stand as regards his wife and five children?

Well, when Patriot Crosbie, the father of five children who believed the German Empire menaced his country, enlisted in the World War he was convinced he was doing the right thing for his young and the young of the United States. As he saw it—and still sees it—he was at the time merely a medium for providing food and clothing for his children. He had adequate insurance when he enlisted, so they would have been provided with food and clothing up to maturity if he had been killed in action. He reasoned—and still reasons—that the human race would have been better off if people of his age, which was thirty-six at that time, were killed off and the young spared. As he sees it, there was no chance of a thirty-six-year-old insurance broker ever discovering a cure for cancer, say, but some eighteen-year-old who was killed, if he had survived, might possibly have made the discovery—or done something equally important for his fellow humans.

Today, in joining the Communist movement, Comrade Crosbie reasons that he is taking the best step possible for his descendants.

Comrade Crosbie's view is that he, as father of five children, will have a great many descendants. As he sees it, if the present drift of all the money in the country into the hands of an ever decreasing minority continues, his descendants will become starving serfs eventually. Although Comrade Crosbie would like new leisure for trout fishing and bridge at this time of life, he feels it is his duty to

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"die in the harness" working for a change of the system that will assure his descendants a just share of the resources of the country in which they are to be born.



All of which brings us to the young of the country and the movement toward Communism going on among them today. There are comparatively few Crosbys, although he told me that he knows of a dozen or so conservative educators, and a few business men, who are so disgusted with the programs of both major parties that they are seriously considering Communism, and probably will espouse that cause. Nevertheless, their numbers are negligible. But the numbers of young Communists being trained in public—and even private—schools in the United States ought to give our Democratic and Republican leaders alike more serious pause.

Although no accurate statistics on the subject are available, surveys and various reports indicate there are about 150,000 enthusiastic, thinking young Communists in the public schools and state universities of the United States today. Not nearly that many men are enrolled in the American Army. And the figure is a minimum—some estimates place the scholastic Communists at 250,000.

The total is increasing. The National Student League, twenty-seven chapters of which marched solidly in the last May Day parade in New York City, is responsible for new recruiting daily.

Naturally Communists in the schools are most plentiful in New York City, where some place the total at 50,000 or more. But the National Student League is just that—national—it has active branches, with school pupils as recruiting sergeants, in Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, San Francisco, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Baltimore, Denver, Providence, Mobile, Birmingham, Kansas City, Boston, Little Rock, Atlanta, Des Moines, Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Duluth. Enrollments vary from five to 2,300 in a single city.

The league, directed diligently by some of the coldest and keenest minds in the Communist party, is especially active among Negro students in the South, where it has been very successful ever since the Scottsboro case. Communist teachers, whom we'll examine in this article, see to it that the students are fed Red doctrines in vivid and flamboyant literature.

I happened on pamphlets of the literature secretly sent by Communist teachers to members of the National Student League for distribution throughout the country. The pamphlets generally denounce the Boy Scouts and R. O. T. C. The chief preachment of them all is "struggle in coöperation with that class which has everything to gain by a new social order and nothing to lose, the working class."



One pamphlet, secretly distributed around public schools in all the cities mentioned above, read:

"Professional patriots, local, Federal, and State Governments are uniting to destroy the educational opportunities of the masses. . . . Boards of Education have served their money masters well. . . . Workers' children are forced to fight to go to school. . . . Bankers and business men control what shall be taught. . . . Teachers are forced to teach lies to the children. . . . Throughout the United States it is the policy of the white rulers to keep the Negro workers in ignorance. . . . Life is entirely different in the new schools of Soviet Russia. . . . Teachers have a real voice in educational legislation. . . ."

Decidedly, radicalism has joined the three R's.

The Communist teachers are seeing that it gets due prominence among the three other R's. Exactly how many teachers are workers in the Communist movement, or actually members of the hard-to-get-into Communist party, really a secret order, nobody knows. The party protects information about teachers because it wants them to keep

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their jobs—they are where they can do most good, the sachems of the Communist party believe. But, although many teachers keep their affiliations secret, a surprising number are willing to confess their Red faith publicly.

A piece of legislation was introduced in the New York Legislature not long ago, the Ives Bill. Nobody paid much attention to it because it looked like one of those high-sounding bills that permit a legislator to plaster his obscure name on some innocent if useless piece of legislation and so get himself some publicity. The bill provided an oath of allegiance for teachers. In part, the oath read:

"I solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support the Constitution of the United States of America, the Constitution of the State of New York, and that I will faithfully perform all duties of my position, to which I am now assigned."

The entire oath sounded altogether innocuous. New York City was extremely surprised when 700 public school teachers rose in wrath and indignantly protested that they would not take any such oath! Many of them stoutly announced they were members of the American League Against War and Facism, an organization which includes such Red sachems as William Z. Foster and Robert Minor.

The Communist teachers of New York, bolder than those in other cities because they stand solidly together, make their force felt in school politics, as well as in their classrooms. The two radical groups, the Rank and Filers and the Militant Progressives, have power in the Teachers' Union of New York City. Professor John Dewey, of Columbia University, head of the union's special grievance committee, summarized their attitude in one sentence:

"The leaders of the minority groups conceive that the proper purpose of the union is to join the class war, in order to promote the cause of the workers against employers."



Wise city officials do not deny that Communism exists among the young in the schools of our country, or that it is championed by many teachers. But they are uncertain how to proceed.

The proposition was put to Mayor Fiorello La Guardia, a wise Chief Executive as well as an honest and plain-spoken one.

"What causes this Communistic sentiment?" Mayor La Guardia was asked.

"There is a great dissatisfaction among those fortunate enough to have received an education," he replied. "The reason for this is the lack of any solution of our economic troubles, or any justification of the conditions which have resulted in the maladjustment of our surpluses and our wants. I agree that there is an extreme trend toward radicalism among the educated."

"What are you going to do about it?"

"Nothing can be done about it," responded Mayor La Guardia, who is famous for wanting to do things, and then doing them.

"Any action of mine would be of no avail," he added. "My method of correction lies in the correction of the condition which creates this situation. I advocate the readjustment of economic conditions. I want to go to the root of the matter."

Can anything be done about it?

I think so. Even Comrade Crosbie admitted to me that although he has espoused Communism he believes there are honest and intelligent, if misguided, men in the Democratic and Republican parties who are industriously trying to correct abuses by working from within. Not all persons prominent in politics strive simply to feather their own nests to the exclusion of all thought of the country's welfare, even Crosbie is convinced.

But are these honest men organizing teachers and students to enthusiastic support of programs that will work

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toward the "readjustment of economic conditions" and get "at the root of the matter," as Mayor La Guardia put it?

If they are, they certainly are keeping their efforts a secret. The intelligent student of today, who has high principles and is interested in the government of his country, takes a look at ways and means of doing his bit. He sees the major parties very busily working at the business of making fat livings out of government. His intelligence will not permit him to escape a conviction that scarcely anybody involved in government is sacrificing anything for the country, but everybody is seeking personal enrichment through service of the country. He either decides to get his, hops in and begins grabbing (thereby doing his part to alienate the next generation), or he turns in disgust from the two major parties and cocks his ear to hear new dogmas. Today he is being trained in the schools to accept such dogmas, even if radical.

The Crosbies are not many. But the sons and daughters of Crosbies now in schools are legion.



If our system of Democracy is to live it is up to those leaders in our two parties who are not simply professional politicians to convince the young in our schools and colleges that they are *wanted* and *needed* to correct abuses in the two parties. This can be done by demonstrating to them that there are self-sacrificing men and women now actually working to get at "the root of the matter," and by organizing them so that they can be told exactly what they are called upon to do.

Youth at present is being left to draw its own conclusions from a seat on the fence. The players inside the park ignore youth and, so far as youth can see, offer only an exhibition of how aggressive and expert they are in taking care of themselves. Outside the park accomplished Communist artists cordially invite youth to look at a picture of how beautiful a pageant the show might be.

The Communist artists convinced Crosbie, a mature, balanced business man, to turn from the selfish players inside the park and devote his life to making the prophetic picture come true. They will easily convince youth in increasing numbers if the players continue to play for the benefit of themselves alone.