naturally restricting their purchases to bare necessities.

If recovery is to come within the next few months it will not be initiated by business. Since the beginning of the recession last September business has had but one solution to offer, a proposal that was clearly impossible in a period of economic decline—a reduction of taxes. Whether the Administration’s spending program will get under way soon enough to turn the tide remains to be seen. It has already been before Congress for six weeks without action. Each week of delay lessens its chance of succeeding. As the crisis deepens, the financial reserves of both business concerns and individuals become progressively depleted. If Congress refuses to take the steps necessary to start the country toward recovery, the people should know it now so that they may take appropriate action in the coming campaign.

Yankee Communism

THERE is nothing halfway about the Communists. For years they entertained a crushing and well-argued scorn of “bourgeois democracy” and all its works, but now, seized by the sudden conviction that “the great majority of our people,” as Earl Browder puts it, “are not ready to support a socialist reorganization of America,” the party’s ardor has been transferred in all its intensity to “American democratic institutions.” Its tenth national convention has just adopted an amended constitution under which the party substitutes “affiliation to the Communist International” for its status as a “section” of that organization; demands citizenship or a declared intention of acquiring citizenship if possible as a prerequisite of membership; decrees expulsion for “advocates of terrorism and violence as a method of party procedure”; and directs all the party’s power against “any clique, group, circle, faction, or party, which conspires or acts to subvert, undermine, weaken, or overthrow any or all institutions of American democracy whereby the majority of the American people have obtained power to determine their own destiny in any degree.”

On the face of things American liberals, who for years have taunted the party with its lack of democracy, its monolithic structure, its ultimate reliance on force, and its blind obedience to Moscow, should rejoice at this accretion to their ranks, but if it gives them the feeling of being embraced by a bear they are hardly to be wondered at. They might first of all view with some suspicion the violence of the conversion. It would be one thing for the Communists to say frankly to the progressive and labor forces of the country: “We want a socialist America; you don’t. We differ fundamentally from you about a lot of things, and your idea of democracy is certainly not ours, but if fascism comes we’ll all stew in the same pot, so we propose to work along with you on particular issues where the combination can block the fascist advance. And in the meantime we intend to go on trying to convince you that socialism is the only way out.” That would have been easy to understand and refreshingly honest. But in fact the Marxist internationalists, airily shoving their socialism into a vague future, have emerged as the only true, red-white-and-blue Americans, with Earl Browder and William Z. Foster as spiritual descendants of Jefferson and Lincoln, communism as the flowering spirit of ’76, and Yankee Doodle about to supplant the “Internationale.” They “extend the hand of brotherly cooperation” to “the great majority of Catholics” and rejoice in “fighting shoulder to shoulder with them for the same economic and social aims.”

It would be presumptuous for us to pass on the motivations of the party in its present approach, but because that approach involves the cooperation of all progressive forces, it is not amiss to comment on the strategy involved. It is first a foolish strategy because it is too clumsy to be taken seriously and too devious to be practiced whole-heartedly. The party’s protestations that it has always been in the main stream of the American democratic tradition have an ex post facto odor; the Rooseveltts, LaGuardias, and even the sacred Farmer-Laborites might well ask with the poet: “Perhaps it was right to dissemble your love, but why did you kick me downstairs?”

But whether the party is believed or succeeds only in appearing slightly ridiculous is after all its own lookout. What concerns us far more is the danger of its infecting the labor and progressive groups, to which it appeals in the name of democracy, with its doctrinaire vendettas. Here the paradox of the party’s position is most glaringly apparent, for despite its earnest efforts to convince the public that it is American and democratic to the core, it has the ignorance of American political mores to decree in its new constitution that “no party member shall have personal or political relationship with Trotskyites, Lovestonites, or other known enemies of the party and the working class.” Since it is for the party to say who is and who is not an “enemy of the working class,” this clause gives a political group an intolerable control over the most personal affairs of its members. If that is all right with the Communists it is all right with us, but as for the American tradition, we might remind Browder that this is a country in which even a du Pont may marry a Roosevelt. Politically, this constitutional stricture indicates that whenever a Communist joins a trade union or a popular-front group of any sort his first effort must be to bring about the expulsion of all Trotskyites, Lovestonites, isolationists, and other foes of the Communist Party’s particular brand of democracy. This may be traditional Communist procedure, but shorn
of the genuine and profound revolutionary objective which once was used to justify it, it can only add to what is already an oversupply of political bigotry on the left.

Tinder for Fascist Fires

On the eve of a Congressional inquiry into subversive fascist movements, we had better acquire some perspective. What the inquiry is likely to bring to light is the attempts by foreign governments to start fascist fires in America. But these attempts would lack significance if kindling did not already exist in our own institutions and our own ways of thought. By themselves the shirt-brigades, the Bunds, the anti-Semitic lies might be regarded merely as forms of paranoia—trivial delusions if we could count on the health of the state. But can we?

The most characteristic fascist form in America today is the power of the regional Führer like Mayor Hague of Jersey City. Huey Long was the great example of such regional tyrants, but while his ability has never been equaled since his death, his objectives have been copied by others. A local autocracy like that in Louisiana under Long, or Georgia under Talmadge, or Jersey City under Hague, or Kansas City under Pendergast, or Massachusetts under Hurley must be viewed as a rehearsal for a greater national effort to come. In ordinary times it could be dismissed as another instance of the familiar phenomenon of the local political "boss." But it often happens in history that the familiar petty tyranny changes, and takes on the form given it by current tensions and struggles. Regional fascism, as it is beginning to emerge today, is based on the local political machine; it gets its sustenance from graft, crime, and boodle, its terrorism is the necessary terrorism to ward off defeat and collapse under the pressure of united progressive groups. But in its meaning and direction it is incipient fascism.

Another focal center of fascist infection is the tyranical corporation. Study the internal structure of the large corporation, watch it in action, see how mercilessly orders are given and enforced from the top down, see the truckling to the top man and the slavish fear of him, and you get a pretty good idea of our native Führer-prinzip and of a totalitarian state that does not have to be imported from abroad. This applies wherever you see such a corporate structure, whether it is in Pittsburgh, Youngstown, Hollywood, Detroit, or New York. Today the corporation is engaged not only in the economic pursuit of profits. It has become politicized, and is fighting the democratic principle that still largely obtains in our governmental life. One has only to think of the bitter fight of Girdler and Ford against the Wagner Act, to read the testimony in the Harlan trial today, and to recall the Memorial Day massacre in Chicago just a year ago to understand the true nature of this resistance. When the corporation cannot win its fight against democracy by economic means, it may call in military and coercive means and attempt to become the corporate state.

It has such a coercive weapon at hand in our indigenous vigilantism. We are so close to the frontier that the vigilante spirit still slumbers in us. As a country that has grown through immigration, we have native resentments that can be stirred up against what is labeled alien and "un-American." As a large sprawling country that has grown too fast, we still nourish our sectional hatreds and our agrarian-urban rivalries. The recent history of strike-breaking movements, of the Mohawk Valley plan and the Johnstown plan, of citizens' committees and vigilante groups is a history that casts monstrous shadows on the future. And to it we may attribute the festering infection of our own racial prejudices—our anti-Negro and anti-Jewish feeling, the latter of which is growing alarmingly. In a fascist attempt the sinews of war are the funds furnished by the big corporations; the armies are gangsters that are enrolled from the unemployed, the muddled, the insecure; the martial spirit is the psychology of vigilantism, drummed up to a hysterical pitch with unscrupulous slogans and catchwords.

It is here that we come to the influence of the Catholic church. Nothing on the American horizon—not Southern reaction nor the reign of terror among share-croppers nor the tyrant corporations nor the cold suppressions of a Hague—is as dangerous for the next decade of our life as the organized propaganda of the Catholic hierarchy. We say the hierarchy, because we cannot believe that the workers and tradesmen that make up the rank and file of Catholics in America are represented by the Father Curran and the Father Coughlin and the Cardinal Hayeses that presume to speak for them. We shall have more to say in future issues about the way in which anti-labor, anti-progressive, anti-democratic hysterias are being stirred through the speeches and writings of members of the hierarchy. Here we want only to point out the connection between the fascist threat and the activity of this largest single minority group in the country.

These are the main centers of infection. They do not add up to fascism; they only form a potential fascism. The infection can be stopped, but not by fear, silence, inaction. To stop it we must make the majority will effective, in our economic as well as in our political life. To stop it we must create employment again, strengthen our government, adopt an affirmative policy toward the attempts of democracies in Europe and Latin America to meet the same fascist threat. The health of our state must be an internal health, achieved at home; but it is also indivisible from the health of democratic states throughout the world.