

# Norman Thomas: 70 Years Old

By WILLIAM Z. FOSTER

ON NOV. 20 Norman Thomas, six times Socialist Party candidate for President, celebrated his 70th birthday. This was made the occasion for

many columns of friendly felicitations in the bourgeois press. Such a deluge of capitalist encomiums should surprise no one. The ruling class are in the habit of know-



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ing their friends and treating them accordingly. They do not take seriously the occasional chatter about Socialism by Thomas, nor does he. His political category is that of a mild liberal. There are few bourgeois politicians in the country who would rate such an outpouring of bourgeois birthday greetings as has been accorded Thomas.

The time was, a generation or so ago, when the Socialist Party was a constructive force in the life of the American working class. It exposed the evils of capitalism, called upon the workers to adopt independent

political action, combatted the reactionary Gompers bureaucracy, propagated a perspective of socialism, and otherwise gave a constructive lead to the labor movement. Those were the days of Eugene Victor Debs and other fighters.

But this period of progressive, proletarian leadership has long since passed for the Socialist Party. Under opportunist domination, particularly that of Norman Thomas, that party has systematically degenerated, until now it is just another tiny organization supporting capitalism. The difference between the fighter Debs and the liberal Thomas is the sign of the decay of the Socialist Party.

THE SOCIALISM of Thomas is only a slick defense of the aggressive line of American imperialism, veiled under a few lingering socialist phrases. Thomas and his co-workers support the main war program of Wall St., no less basically than do the Meanys, Reuthers, Dubinskys, and their kind. Like them and Wall St., the leading political objective now in Thomas' life is to block and defeat the Communists—that is, Socialism—and to save the capitalist system.

Norman Thomas and the little coterie of Social Democrats who trail along with him play no constructive role whatever in the fight against war and fascism. Every policy put out by the State Department—Marshall Plan, Truman Doctrine, European Defense Community, Paris agreement, or what not—can always depend upon Thomas' agreement, with his usual inconsequential amendments regarding details of enforcement.

The same can be said also about the serious attacks that have been made upon civil liberties, not only by McCarthy but by both the Truman and Eisenhower administrations. Norman Thomas' general position in this respect may be gauged from the fact that in the debate, three years ago, on the McCarran-Walters "subversive control" bill, he championed the administration plan of concentration camps for Communists.

THE DECAY of the Socialist ideas that Thomas may once have flirted with, is part and parcel of the political degeneration of the American Socialist Party and of the whole right-wing Socialist International

When the real test of the Socialist movement of the world came in World War I and the Russian Revolution which followed it, the right wing Socialists, of which Thomas is a typical leader, exposed its essential character as a defender of capitalism against advancing socialism. This has been its line ever since, and the capitalists of the world, working feverishly save capitalism by wiping out socialism, understand this fact very well and everywhere look upon the Norman Thomases as their most reliable allies.

The New York Times, in its editorial of birthday greetings to Mr. Thomas, hits the nail squarely on the head when it thus does homage to his devotion to capitalism: "We stand the more firmly because this 'Socialist' (Times quotes) has lived and striven among us for long, unselfish years."

This explains clearly why Norman Thomas is such a darling of the bourgeoisie, and it also explains, far more importantly, why the leadership of the workers of the world is decisively passing out of the hands of right Social Democrats such as Thomas into those of Communist fighters.