

**LEWIS EARNEST
LABOR LEADER,
JOHNSON SAYS**

Ex-Chief of NRA Ridicules
Contention He Seeks
Political Power.

(Gen. Johnson Wrote This Weekly.)

BY HUGH JOHNSON
BETHANY BEACH, Del., Aug. 20.

—Many disturbed commentators regard labor's "non-partisan" league as a final political crystallization of class war. To some of them, it is the beginning of a movement that, according to Dorothy Thompson, may lead either to Communism or to the Italian corporate state.

To others it is John Lewis' bid for the presidency in 1940, on a program leading to a dictatorship and Red revolution. If anything leads to the candidacy of John Lewis for President, it would be o. k. with this writer, who does not believe in any change in our system. There would be at least one vote for him cast in confidence and considerable amusement.

We once drove back from the University of Virginia's Institute of Public Opinion at Charlottesville, where that writer had engaged in a debate on the New Deal with James Wadsworth. John Lewis had gone along for company, and both admired and respected Mr. Wadsworth, but John was on the other side of the argument. His contribution, he chuckled, was "sneering at the Senator's feet." It had undoubtedly been disconcerting, for he sat right in front of Mr. Wadsworth and glared continuously downward from under his shaggy eye-brows at the Senator's shoes. Boxers know that trick.

FOR the rest of the long drive to home, we tried atrociously to barber-shop a collaboration on "Just a Song at Twilight," "Just Break the News to Mother," "Just Before the Battle, Mother," several other "Justs," and the whole gamut of Civil, Spanish-American and World War songs—and we had nothing more invigorating than soda pop and the rhythm of a motor.

Once when this correspondent was convalescing from a slight operation in the Walter Reed Hospital, Lewis came to visit unannounced. It was on the eve of the storm in the A. F. of L. He threw his broad hat on the bed, ran his fingers through his wiry mane and sat down without a word. "What's the matter, John?" "Well, sometimes," he said with a sheepish grin, "I think I take myself too seriously."

In a recent settlement of a big strike, referring to the difficulty of controlling new unions, he said to the management group: "This isn't like so many labor settlements, where I have sat in a room with one man and come to a binding agreement just like that (he snapped his fingers), because these boys are green. They'll learn." What he meant but couldn't say was what everybody who ever dealt with him in his own proper office knows. He is the most dependable man in the labor movement.

WHEN he said that he might be taking himself too seriously, he was recognizing the fact that he is a realist for the industrial type of unionism in those industries in which it is compelled by the logic of circumstance, and that his high enthusiasm may sometimes run ahead of dependable developments.

You can't deduce subversive motives in a man like that.

The "non-partisan" labor league may be a vehicle for the political aspiration of the ambitious George Berry, whose lapel labels, "Pick Berry," almost nominated him for vice president in 1924—an honor from which he was blocked then by no less an authority than Franklin Roosevelt. But the league is no accessory to any political ambition of John Lewis—only to his hopes for his labor ideals.

His logic on that was simple. It was the reverse of the suicidal tactics of the Jeffersonian Democrats, the Coughlinites, Townsends, Longites and Lemkites. By opposing Roosevelt they are contributing to the worst enemy they could conjure up. Lewis has more sense.

THE row about John Lewis is ridiculous nonsense. He was a Republican up to 1932. He has been offered and refused Cabinet positions in that party. The most flattering gestures were made to him by Landon boosters before the convention. He is just a practical idealist, fighting for what he thinks is right and using such fair weapons as come to hand.

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