

Ghosts of America First Haunt Mayor Putnam in Bay State Poll

10/21/42
By Sender Garlin

(Daily Worker Staff Correspondent)

BOSTON, Mass., Oct. 20.—Mayor Roger L. Putnam of Springfield, who is opposing Leverett Saltonstall, now in office, for the governorship of Massachusetts, is a smooth talker. But he can't explain away his participation in that America First meeting in Springfield shortly before Pearl Harbor.

At that meeting, held Oct. 23, 1941, the Democratic gubernatorial aspirant — who has since boasted of a congratulatory letter from Jim Farley on his victory in the primaries — welcomed Father Killis, a priest of Coughlinité persuasion, and Sen. Burton K. Wheeler to Springfield.

I had an interview with candi-

date Putnam last night, following his address to the Democratic campaign workers of Boston at the Parker House. I took the opportunity to ask some direct questions about his relation to that America First meeting in Springfield and a number of other things, including his stand on the war.

LUCE PUFFS HIM UP

Puffed in a recent issue of Henry Luce's "Time" magazine as "blue blood, 48-year-old smart, handsome energetic mayor of Springfield, independently wealthy and descended from the Lowells on both his father's and mother's side," Mr. Putnam is the choice of those interests in the state which are fighting President Roosevelt's foreign and domestic policies. Al-

though Putnam and his crowd (which includes the unmentionable senior Senator from Massachusetts, David I. Walsh) occasionally show formal deference to F.D.R., it is speedily observable that Jim Farley is the greater hero to them.

Mayor Putnam is a nephew of President - emeritus A. Lawrence Lowell of Harvard whose report on the Sacco-Vanzetti frame-up helped hustle the two innocent Italian-American workers to the electric chair in the Charlestown, Mass., prison 15 years ago.

I asked Mayor Putnam about his talk at that America First meeting where Father Killis, Sen. Wheeler and other orators assailed President Roosevelt, Great Britain

(Continued on Page 5)

(Continued from Page 1)

and the Soviet Union. He explained that he left early and didn't stay to hear the speeches.

PRaised AMERICA FIRST

But a quite different light is cast on Putnam's role at this meeting by the report in the Springfield press the following morning. Devoting more than three full columns to the rally which was held with the mayor's O. K. in the Municipal Auditorium over the protest of the Springfield Communist Party, leading labor people and progressives, the Springfield Union quotes Putnam as follows:

"You have gathered here tonight to hear two great Americans," he said, referring to Gillis and Wheeler. "I shall not be privileged, as you are, to hear their addresses. Both men are champions, in the strongest sense of the word, in the things that they believe to be right." Of Fr. Gillis the mayor said "he is a preacher whose sermons all can well listen to." Of Sen. Wheeler the mayor said, "he too, is a great crusader." In concluding his remarks Putnam noted the fact that "the Communist Party has vigorously protested my presence here tonight," but failed to amplify on this point.

In our interview the Democratic (Farley) candidate for governor also found it difficult to explain his endorsement by James Shea, a Christian Front agitator in Springfield and spokesman for Charles Coughlin's Social Justice until its suppression.

Mayor Putnam was visibly embarrassed when I brought up the Shea matter and sought to dismiss it by saying that Shea was "you know, an eccentric who doesn't carry much weight." Putnam did not intimate, however, that he would publicly repudiate Shea's endorsement.

SHIELDS COUGHLINITES

This man Shea, a violent anti-Semite, in protesting the ban on Coughlin's pro-fascist sheet, said in a statement published in the Springfield Daily Republican of May 7 that he "has never found a word in the publication which could be properly called seditious." He observed also that "the articles were based on the truth."

This campaigner for Putnam added that Coughlin "made a few mistakes, but it wasn't sedition"

that caused the suppression of Social Justice. It was "his daring in attacking the Jews," Shea explained, "which brought about government intervention to stop the publication."

Interestingly enough, Mayor Putnam himself has brought up the question of the Second Front during the interview.

"Of course," he said, "no layman has the right to speak on the Second Front." But he hastened to add: "But I'm for it, you see. But it's a question of transportation. Of course I would like to see one. Yes, we must all pull together in the war effort." (He didn't indicate the direction of the pulling together).

When he made this statement the gubernatorial candidate knew he was speaking for publication. But several days prior to our interview Putnam was approached by a delegation of Polish women who asked him to sign a Slav organization's petition on the Second Front.

"NO SECOND FRONT"

He told the women that it was "a nice petition," that in the normal course of affairs he "would be glad to sign it—but not just now." He explained that he was now running for office, that many people in the state are opposed to the Second Front and also to President Roosevelt, and that he doesn't want to lose any votes.

This unguarded statement follows logically from his assertion when he got the gubernatorial nomination (for which he was congratulated by Jim Farley) that the war is not an issue in the Massachusetts elections. Putnam, incidentally, was a Republican and ardent supporter of Hoover in 1932. From a Hoover Republican in 1932 to a Farley Democrat in 1942 is a rather natural transition.

While Putnam is a Protestant, his wife is a Catholic and his campaign publicity makes much of the fact that several of his children are attending parochial schools. Putnam thus hopes to make a successful bid for the Irish-Catholic vote in the state. As part of that strategy he and his political supporters have inflated a referendum on birth control to be voted on Nov. 3 into the major issue of the campaign, subordinating all other issues including the war against Hitler and the Axis. (A similar law, merely permitting physicians to give medical advice in cases where child-bearing would endanger the life of the mother, is on the statute books of 46 other states).

Gov. Saltonstall has said that while he would exercise his personal right to vote against the Referendum, he nevertheless deplored the actions of the Democrats in turning this into a major issue in these critical times when the urgent need is for national unity behind the war policies of the President.