

13,000 Voted for Him--Of 337,000

Any Wonder Why Wingcollar Howard Smith Loves the Poll Tax?

(This is the sixth in a series on the leading defeatists in Congress who are running for re-election.)

By ADAM LAPIN
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WASHINGTON, D. C., May 21.—Rep. Howard Smith of Virginia has a little war of his own he wants to win first before he is willing to support the nation's war against the Axis.

This is his war of many years standing against the labor movement—again the very mainstay of the war effort in the mills and workshops of the nation.

As recently as March 10, Smith proposed to the House Naval Affairs Committee, considering his latest sweatshop bill, that the government hold up its prosecution of the war to punish and destroy the trade unions.

With his pince-nez dangling and his Adam's apple bobbing up and down inside his old-fashioned wing collar, the lean, hard-faced poll-taxer admitted that his bill was "drastic." He added that it might even cause an "insurrection" on the part of labor.

The "insurrection" talk was rhetoric, of course; and was just another slur at the patriotism of the nation's workers. But that the Smith



REP. HOWARD SMITH

bill would have had a disastrous effect on the war effort was solemnly stated by every responsible official in charge of production.

PROVOKING UNREST

Smith didn't try to deny that his bill would hamper production. His answer was that if there is "an insurrectional spirit" in labor "let us find it out now."

What Smith was really saying was obvious enough: let's try and provoke strikes and demonstrations of unrest, and then let's slap the labor movement down hard so that it can never rise again.

No wonder the CIO and the A. F. L. charged that the Smith bill to outlaw the union shop and suspend the wage and hour law was deliberate sabotage of the war effort.

Together with a group of other poll-tax Congressmen, Smith deserted the administration's fight to lift the restrictions on aid to the United Nations in the Neutrality Act at a critical point last November. As a result, the Neutrality Act amendments passed the House by only a narrow 16 vote margin.

Smith said that he had "reached the parting of the ways," that he would not support administration foreign policy "until we have first set our own house in order and quelled the labor insurrection."

THE DEFEATIST BLOC

The thin dividing line between Smith and outright defeatists like Reps. Day, Hoffman and Fish has become virtually non-existent. This is perhaps most clearly seen in the utterances of Smith's closest poll-tax associates and co-workers on the tory-dominated Rules Committee, Reps. E. E. Cox of Georgia and Martin Dies of Texas.

The case of Axis-propagandist Dies will be considered in this series tomorrow, but it is worth pointing out now that Cox has been as irreconcilably anti-Soviet in his attitude as his Texas colleague.

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Senate and House for further consideration. I for one am unwilling to vote to plunge this country into the horrors and uncertainties of war until we have first set our own house in order, and quelled the labor insurrection, with its violence and bloodshed, that is occurring daily in our midst, or until the President and his

On No. 12 of last year, Rep. Howard Smith served notice in the House that he would not support the administration's anti-Hitler foreign policy until drastic action was taken to crush the labor movement.

dairy farmer and banker, Smith has been a special pleader for big business interests.

Davison is expected to be an appealing candidate to the farmers and small businessmen of the district. He is a native Virginian, is deeply rooted in the social and political life of the district and was the former mayor of Alexandria.

Smith's most potent allies will be the powerful political machine of Senator Harry Byrd of Virginia in which he is an important cog—and the poll tax.

Negroes are, of course, automatically disenfranchised by the poll tax. Thousands of poor whites are ruled out by the cumulative \$1.50 poll tax which in many cases comes to as much as \$5 or \$6.

Only 13,000 people in the district's 350,000 population voted for Smith in 1938 in the general election. In the Democratic primary earlier that year, he polled 19,000 against 6,800 for William E. Dodd Jr., son of the former U. S. Ambassador to Germany.

The poll-tax and the Byrd machine—these will be tough obstacles for Davison. But his supporters are convinced that he has a real chance, that Smith can be defeated

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When former Ambassador to the Soviet Union Joseph Davies praised the leadership of Joseph Stalin in a magazine article, Cox made a 30-minute speech in the House in the course of which he called the Soviet Premier, among other things, "this despot Stalin," "Dictator Stalin," and a "bloody-handed moloch." He said that Davies' article was "by inference a hideous assault on the American system of government and way of life."

On Dec. 10, three days after Pearl Harbor, Cox openly allied himself with Rep. Fish, George Sylvester Viereck's friend. He urged that whoever was conducting the drive against Fish "will see the good sense of abandoning it, because if it is not a smear campaign against the gentleman, it has all the appearances of such."

LABOR FIGHTS AT POLLS

Smith's one track mind has been too busy concentrating on his feud with labor for him to do much talking about the broader issues of foreign policy and the war. But it is safe to say that Cox's statements supplement Smith's own "yes, but" pronouncements on the war.

It is Smith's attitude toward the war that is the main issue in the campaign for the Democratic nomination being waged against him by Emmett C. Davison, secretary-treasurer of the A. F. L. International Association of Machinists.

In his first statement, Davison called Smith "the Nation's No. 1 disrupter to a 100 per cent prosecution of the war," and assailed his "disunity tactics."

Davison has the enthusiastic support of both the CIO and the A. F. L. in the eighth district of Virginia, which consists of the Northern tip of the state adjoining the capital.

Many CIO, A. F. L. and Railroad Brotherhood members who work in Washington live in Smith's home town of Alexandria or in other towns in near-by Virginia. They will constitute an important factor in the Democratic primary which takes place on Aug. 4.

The CIO has organized a small Ford plant in Alexandria. The AFL is more strongly entrenched, and has about 10,000 members in the district in the building trades and the Navy's big torpedo station in Alexandria. The railroad brotherhoods are quite strong in the district.

But it would be a mistake to think that opposition to Smith will come solely from the ranks of organized labor. Davison appealed in his initial statements to "farmers, veterans, small merchants, businessmen, bankers and other professional groups."

FOE OF ALL, BUT RICH

All of these groups in his district have cause for resentment against Smith. During his 12 years in Congress, he has consistently opposed all legislation that would benefit small farmers and businessmen. A prosperous real estate speculator,

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