

MACHINERY ON THE SPOT AGAIN

By C. O. Steele

John L. Lewis, chairman of the Committee for Industrial Organization, says that another depression is on the way. "Just the moment business increases," he told the Amalgamated Clothing Workers at their Atlantic City meeting, "they will begin modernizing their plants, tearing out the old machinery, replacing it with more efficient labor-saving devices and laying off men and women. These men and women go out of the market as consumers. So every period of business prosperity in America carries with it the seeds of the next depression."

Few will quarrel with Mr. Lewis' forecast of another depression, unless it be those cheerful souls who say we will not have another because we will never get out of this one, but the thinking will grieve at the naive inference that machinery is to blame. Such reasoning would lead to the conclusion that the cure for unemployment is to replace old machinery by older machinery, or, better still, to do away with machinery entirely.

If it is more toil rather than more wealth that is wanted, that would undoubtedly do the trick; so would requiring each worker to tie one hand behind him or to work blindfolded. The modicum of our foreign trade that has been able to survive the effects of the protective tariff would, of course, disappear instant-

ly. Those perverse foreigners, less nobly inspired, would probably insist on continuing to make things the easy and efficient way so that Americans could not compete abroad, and tariff walls against incoming foreign goods would have to be raised sky high. Imagine the strain on a patriotic American worker's conscience at having to choose between a good pair of machine made shoes (foreign) at four dollars, and a poor pair of handmade shoes (U. S.) at fourteen.

Preposterous nonsense, certainly, to come from the most influential labor leader of our times but not more crackpot than many of the ideas emanating from the school of economists—heaven save the name—who supply the most influential party leader of our times with schemes for the more abundant life. When the simple truth is realized that the way to increase the wealth of a nation is to produce more wealth, and that the cure for the maldistribution of wealth and unemployment is not to do away with machinery but with monopoly, beginning with the granddaddy monopoly of them all, private ownership in land, so that every worker, being free to apply his labor to the natural resources whence comes all wealth and thereby having always another job up his sleeve, can tell the rapacious employer to go to hell, then, and not until then, will there be hope for the country and for democracy.