

LABOR BOARD THROTTLES UNION

Chicago, December 15, 1946. — A popular myth circulated by the liberals is that the Wagner Act and its National Labor Relations Board are a sort of Magna Carta for Labor which has helped organize millions of workers.

The stupidity of this assertion, however, is adequately illustrated here in Chicago where the State Street Council has been able to use the Labor Board to smash an organizational drive amongst the big department stores.

In December 1945, 2,000 organized department store workers left the CIO and joined the AFL Building Service Union. A bureaucratic leadership of the CIO International had stymied organization for close to five years. Wage rates at the Fair and Boston Stores — organized in 1940 — remained at a relatively low level because Goldblatt's, Sears, Carson's, Mandel's, and most of Field's were unorganized.

The new Building Service Local put four organizers to work, mimeographed dozens of thousands of leaflets, and actually had hundreds of members joining its ranks — particularly from Mandel's and Goldblatt's.

"SECRET WEAPON"

The campaign looked like an assured success, when the State Street employers uncovered their secret weapon, the Labor Board. This Board has the members of Local 291 coming and going. When Mandel's fired 25 or 30 workers for Union activity, the Board held that it couldn't do anything about it because "there wasn't enough proof". Some of those discharged had been working for five and ten years. One worker had been told that his job had been eliminated altogether; the next day another Union worker (discharged by Goldblatt's for Union activity) went to Mandel's and was given the job that was "eliminated".

The terror by Colonel Mandel had its effect. At least 90% of the Mandel store is in favor of Unionism, but few of them sign up because they know they can get no protection from the Labor Board, and to date Local 291 has refused to use the strike weapon to whittle Colonel Mandel down to Union size.

At Goldblatt's the Labor Board anti-Union weapon has been used in another manner. Six months ago Local 291 filed for an election for the State Street store of Goldblatt's. It presented far more than the required number of cards. The Company, however, delayed matters for over two months by refusing to show the U. S. government its payroll, so that the Union's membership cards could be compared with it.

After all this stalling, the Labor Board suddenly discovered that another Union—the AFL Retail Clerks—was in the picture. The Clerks, who have only an insignificant minority, naturally refused to agree to an election, as did Goldblatt's. This Union filed a complaint case (a charge that Goldblatt's had discriminated against it by firing one of its members) and with connivance of the Labor Board has thus kept the State Street workers from getting an election. The Board has ruled that no election can be held until after the "C" case is disposed of—which will probably be at least another 6 or 8 months.

DIVISION OF LABOR

Thus the Labor Board acts as a perfect cover for the State Street capitalists. It offers absolutely no protection whatsoever for workers who are fired for Union activity and on the other hand, its machinery can be used to stop work-

ers from gaining collective bargaining rights for a long period. The Company is prohibited by law from bargaining with either Union when two Unions are involved in any organization campaign. It therefore has a sure-fire "out" by claiming that it would like to bargain with a Union, but the law prohibits it.

The answer on State Street, as elsewhere, of course, is to disregard the machinery of the capitalist state. Such machinery is always rigged against the workingman (no matter how sweet it is made to smell for the liberals.) The only effective weapon is to SHUT GOLDBLATT'S DOWN. AFL Local 291 wouldn't find that too difficult, since the Goldblatt warehouse is organized into an AFL Teamster Union, which would no doubt support the strike, and the truck-drivers at GB's are in the Teamsters. Shutting off its line of deliveries would paralyze the GB empire of ten large stores and force this so-called liberal management to its knees.

U. S. "DEMOCRACY" REACHES JAPAN

The government's direct role of strike-breaking in the struggle with the miners is not just a tactic being used here in America. The policy of keeping the workers "in their place" is the policy used by the ruling class throughout the world. In occupied Japan strikes that "jeopardize occupation" have been forbidden by a directive of MacArthur.

In reporting the speech of Welfare Minister, Yoshishige Kawai, before the House of Peers, the New York Times on November 29th said: "Mr. Kawai, answering questions from the floor, said the government would actively oppose strikes that had political motives. While the government will continue to support what the Minister described as 'a healthy union movement' even strikes with economic aims will be opposed if they conflict with the public interest, Mr. Kawai declared."

It is significant that this speech was made on the eve of the threatened walk-out of electrical workers in Japan. The strike would cut off all power daily between noon and 5 P. M.

Ever since the American occupation troops moved into Japan, the country has been sporadically strike-bound. The workers there have come to realize that they have no more, if not less, economic security under American occupation than they previously had. The lesson is being driven home to them that the capitalist class throughout the world has but one aim—to hold the workers in subjection.

NEW STRIKE FORM

To counteract their impoverished conditions, the Japanese workers are attacking their rulers by the use of their strike weapon. They have conducted what they call "production control" strikes. In this type of strike the workers run the plant but withhold the profits from the company until it gives in to the workers' demands.

But after the strike is settled, the profits are turned back to the company. If the Japanese workers can efficiently run these plants, why must they turn them back to their "legal" owners? Wouldn't it be simpler to seize the plants and run them for their own use and end this system of capitalist robbery? In that way the Japanese workers could use the profits of the business to purchase food that is so badly needed. Its population is estimated to reach 100,000,000 by 1955 and it has been calculated that the country can only support 80,000,000. Why must 20 million people be starved to death when the workingclass is capable of running the country on the basis of production for use—which could support the larger population.

STRIKE VICTORY AT SIVYER STEEL

That a Union contract is merely as strong as the membership, was recently illustrated in the Chicago Sivyer Steel Strike led by the militant leadership of Local 800 UAW-CIO.

The personnel director at Sivyer Steel in Chicago, Charles Reynolds is a former warden of the penitentiary at Brownville Texas. He is especially incensed at the idea that Local 800 has chosen a Negro as the Local President. He and other top management officials took the attitude that they could interpret the Union contract anyway they saw fit.

The Company decided on its own hook that it didn't have to discuss grievances concerning piece-work wages and time-studies. It refused to post notices for job openings on the bulletin boards. Instead of offering better paying jobs to those with highest seniority it advertised in various foreign language papers for new workers. The Company refused to pay "down-time" for the first ten minutes that any worker lost because his machine was broken down or there was some other company-caused stoppage of his work.

"ILLEGAL STRIKE"

Sivyer men got a little tired of this kind of treatment and pounded the picket line. The Company denounced it as an "illegal" strike, and the International refused to authorize it. But the railroad brotherhoods, the AFL Teamsters, and the 400 workers at the plant, all refused to cross the picket line. After three and a half weeks of this treatment the Sivyer Steel Company finally sent its President Martin Fladoes, in from Milwaukee, and he conceded to all the Union's demands.

Local 800 is in the unfortunate position that internal UAW politics has separated it from its brothers and sisters in Local 575 Milwaukee, who also work for Sivyer. The Milwaukee Local supported Reuther, while the Chicago local supported Thomas in the last UAW convention. Since then, however, there has been a change in Local 800's leadership, but regional director Mattson and his "white-supremacy" representative Bishop, have done all they could to keep the two locals from functioning together. Last year the Milwaukee Local was on strike for two weeks and received no support from the Chicago workers, due to the internal UAW fight.

The new Chicago Local leadership however, is taking all measures to remedy the situation, so that by united action in both cities a better wage pattern for all Sivyer workers can be gained.

Such collaboration will obviously be an important step toward the establishment of a national foundry wage scale and contract, and toward the elimination of piece-work and other abuses in the foundry industry.

The strike itself illustrated that despite a no-strike clause in the contract and despite an unfriendly attitude by the International leadership, the Company is powerless when the men are united and have a FIGHTING PROGRAM. The Company had to publicly announce that while its contract provides that it can fire workers for breaking the contract, it was powerless to do so in this case.

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Lessons of the Miners Strike

The Battle of the Mines has reached a temporary lull. John L. Lewis has again done a yeoman's job for the capitalists whose interests he serves by sending the miners back to work empty-handed. But the fight of the miners must go on, because the capitalist system will not permit it to cease.

Since the signing of the Krug-Lewis agreement in May, 1945, the real wages of the miners have decreased, rather than increased. Despite the nominal 54 hour week, actual hours worked in August were only 42½ per week. The government did next to nothing to introduce safety provisions. The "Royalty" fund has acted as a speed-up instrument, rather than as a benefit to the miners.

The future perspective for the miner is even more bleak. Coal used to supply 75% of the energy in the U. S.; today it only supplies 43%. Introduction of labor-saving machinery has been phenomenal. From 1939 to 1944 alone the manual labor required to mine a ton of coal fell by 22%. Since 1923 the introduction of loading, cleaning and cutting machines has cut down operating costs and has made "ex-miners" out of hundreds of thousands of workers. In the next few years the mine operators intend to invest another \$200,000,000 for machinery. The security of the coal miner is thus exceedingly slim. He remembers all too well the \$14.47 wage in 1933 and the \$23.88 average weekly wage in 1939. He knows that he must protect himself against the barren days ahead.

WAGES AND PRICES

The capitalist press brayed like donkeys about the "high wages" of the miners, but actually the hourly wages of the miner from 1939 to date have only risen by 40%; in the same period the price of coal at the mine DOUBLED.

Faced with these conditions Lewis was forced to take some action. His declaration that the contract with the government is ended brought on a strike which in a month or two would have paralyzed the American economy, and seriously affected the whole world economy.

Banker Cyrus Eaton, director of the C. & O. railroad, and spokesman of big mining interests (he played a major role in the Krug-Lewis settlement), called upon the operators to make an immediate settlement. According to Time magazine "he was...vehemently sure that if the strike were strung out...European nations would be thrown into the lap of Communism." Harry Moses of the Big Steel trust (which owns a large portion of the mines) also was willing to talk turkey, and it is rumored that the Northern coal operators and Lewis had already reached an agreement calling for 48 hours' pay for a 40 hour week. This would have represented about half of the Lewis' original demand for a 58c an hour boost.

Only the Southern operators balked at this agreement, and behind them stood the power of the capitalist state. Truman and his cohorts wanted to make an example of the coal miners, in preparation for more bitter battles to come. The United Auto Workers are asking for a 23½c per hour raise. Other large unions will follow suit. Truman decided to crack labor's skull. The Goldsborough injunction, prohibiting workers from striking, was the first step. Other and more vicious steps would have followed.

NO MINERS CONSULTED

Faced with such a situation Lewis pulled the chestnuts out of the fire for his capitalist friends. He is just as opposed to Communism as are Eaton and Moses. He called off the (Continued on Page 2)

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STRIKE ACTION CAN BEAT CONGRESS

We have just gone thru an election campaign in which capitalist politicians waxed eloquent about such fake issues as the need for "free enterprise" and less government interference. However, the capitalist class and its Charley McCarthys (Republican and Democratic Parties) are now burning the midnight oil studying and

devising new methods for paralyzing labor's resistance to the attack on its living standards.

The Case Bill which was used as a threat to the railroad strike last summer will be served up again with new modifications by the next Congress. The new Case Bill will in effect make strikes impossible. The planned procedure will be as follows: (1) Negotiation between the union and the boss (2) Negotiations failing, a mediation board will be set up (especially for coal, steel, auto, etc.) During mediation a "cooling off" period (run around) would be required (3) If mediation fails, arbitration boards would be set up with decision-making powers (4) If arbitration breaks down there will be more time killing procedures and boards.

This rignmarole would mean that workers would have to wait 90 days before taking strike action which would be considered "legal". If the workers would refuse to wait for the bosses' courts and boards to make decisions, and go out on strike, the government would declare the strike "illegal" and would openly and brazenly bust the strike by the use of state and national troops.

"MONOPOLY" LAWS

Realizing the tremendous power of industry-wide strikes and collective bargaining the next Congress will attempt to find a formula for introducing bargaining on a local rather than industry wide basis. It may be that anti-monopoly laws will be applied to unions in basic industries. This precedent has already been established in the coal strike where the state of Virginia tried to outlaw the UMW as a trust that "sells membership".

Not even the closed shop for which labor has fought tenaciously for the last 50 years will escape attack. Realizing the importance of this issue Congress may proceed cautiously. Meanwhile 3 states have passed legislation banning the closed shop (Nevada, Arizona, and South Dakota). Considering that in 1945 about 48% of all eligible industrial workers were covered by collective bargaining agreements and 45% of them were working in closed or union shops it (anti-open shop movement) is a blow which is being prepared against the strategic positions which labor has won.

(Continued on Page 2)

DYING INDUSTRY

Today, due to modern machinery, loaders, cutters, one-third the number of miners produce more coal than was mined in the early twenties. These workers are in a dying industry with the possibility of oil and other forms of fuels replacing coal almost entirely.

The miners have learned through years of militant struggles, that the only time for wage increases is when you're still working and on the job. When a depression or business slump occurs, the miners are one of the first of basic industrial workers to be laid off, or to suffer a shortening of the work week. They realize therefore that if they are to keep up with the ever rising cost of living and save a few dollars (if that is possible) for the rainy days ahead, they must gain a wage increase now.

The miners around this locality have to travel from twenty to forty miles round-trip to work every day. This is due to some mines nearby which have been worked out and the shortage of housing near the mines.

John L. Lewis' popularity has waned in this section some years ago, although he has a few admirers among the younger miners who haven't learned of the role he plays as the agent of capitalism within the ranks of workers. Due to some of his attacks and disciplinary action against militants, thousands have joined the Progressive Mine Workers of America which unfortunately also has degenerated after its first spirit of militancy in the thirties.

LETTER from WARD'S

DEAR EDITOR:

It is several years now since the vicious bonus system has been done away with at the Mailing and Addressing Department here at Montgomery Ward. However speedup, which is the object of every bonus system, still exists here. The company maintains a disguised bonus system which is every bit as bad as the previous one. Only it is a little more camouflaged and therefore a little more difficult to expose.

Under the prevailing system number ratings are given each girl. These rates are based on many factors including (1) amount of production of stencils (2) years of service; (3) accuracy. It goes without saying that the first factor overshadows all the rest.

Because of the peculiar methods which the company uses in computing the amount of work done by the girls it is impossible to reach the standards which they set as a prerequisite for a wage increase. If, for instance, a stencil is used on 3 labels, and another is used on 2 labels; the counting device or the addressing mauler will read 1 (per 3) and 1 (per 2). Therefore, like the miners, who used to mine slate and coal (and be paid only for the coal) we are doing a lot of work for which we aren't being paid.

On the question of wages—the terrific increases in the cost of living have already wiped out the meager increases which were given last August (which were long overdue when they were granted).

Judging by the comparatively slow Christmas and New Years "rush" in business the Company may begin laying off help soon. Already there is talk of laying off the least efficient employees. In my opinion this is the strategic moment for carrying on a militant fight against Sewell Avery for a 6 hour day and a 25% increase over existing wages, and against the disguised speed-up system. Unfortunately our Union, Local 20 CIO, is doing nothing to consolidate our ranks. We don't know anything of what's going on.

—A.

MINER'S STRIKE

(Continued from Page 1)

strike without consulting a single coal miner. He called it off without a single gain. It may be that behind the scenes Lewis has a "deal" cooking which will yet "save his face". But such deals do not solve the problems of the mine-worker, anymore than the May agreement solve anything basic.

Continuation of the coal strike could have occurred only under a class struggle and revolutionary leadership. It was a simple question of fighting against the capitalist government or of yielding to it. The answer to Truman and Goldsborough lay in:

- 1—Spreading the strike, instead of permitting hundreds of thousands in steel, railroads, etc., to be locked out.
- 2—Organizing workers defense groups and councils of elected delegates from factories, to defend Labor's right to strike.

The policy of Lewis and of Murray and Green, who supported him, was in direct opposition to the above. These fine gentry spouted sweet words about "fighting", but confined their fistcuffs to pure legal shennigans in the court-rooms. They refused to spread the strike—the only means that would have smashed the foul injunction of Judge Goldsborough. They refused to organize united action of any sort, except in court.

The fear of these labor skates is perhaps best illustrated in Chicago where the President

Chicago Teachers Face Uphill Fight

Local 1, the Chicago section of the American Federation of Teachers, has finally bestirred itself from its long lethargy to ask for a 40% boost in wages for the shamefully underpaid schoolteachers.

The new-found "militancy" of Arthur Walz and his Local 1 leadership is purely malarky, however. The increase for lowest paid newly assigned teachers amounts to only 21%. The 40% request is only for teachers with ten years seniority. Substitute teachers, who are kept out of permanent assignments by the politically corrupt school board, aren't even being dignified by discussion, even though there are 2,000 such unfortunate in the city.

To show its subservience to the grafting Kelly machine, Local 1 is asking for a "higher pegged levy"—an increase in the property tax of homeowners. Anyone with an iota of sense knows that there isn't going to be much of an increase in such a tax in an election year (Mayoral elections take place in April). The Mayor is thus given a convenient "out". After all how can anyone ask such a fine philanthropist to tax poor people that own their own homes?

FUNDS ARE AVAILABLE

Local 1 could, of course, tell Mayor Kelly to go scratch for additional funds. He can cut out the terrific waste and porkchopping that goes on in city government, where many capital-

ist politicians are holding down three jobs (at a total expenditure sometimes of 10 minutes per day). He can also cut down expenses for red squads, for Captain Barnes and his anti-labor squad, and other such niceties.

The fact that local 1 doesn't point these things out indicates that it doesn't want to embrace the good Mayor. The results of such a policy can only be a very meager raise for badly paid teachers.

The namy-pamby leadership of Local 1 is a disgrace to the Labor movement. Although it claims 8,000 members, Local 1 has no real education campaign, and no real participation of the rank and file. It doesn't call any membership meetings; its business is taken care of by a house of delegates—one delegate for about 50 teachers. The functioning of this system is very poor, and the rank and file is pathetically uninformed.

In addition Local 1 pays allegiance to the no-strike policy of the International Union. It confines itself to mere gathering of statistics for Kelly's budget committee and for behind the scenes manoeuvres.

Since the defeat of Kermit Eby's progressive group pressure against the Local 1 leadership has been relaxed. The resentment of the rank and file, particularly the young teachers, must however, soon break through and be instrumental in organizing new progressive forces within Local 1.

CONGRESS

(Continued from Page 1)

The Case Bill in addition to all its other, unsavory qualities will attempt to make unions liable for "breach of contract". This would enable labor-hating employers to drag unions into court and exhaust them financially. This is a return to the precedent established in the Danbury Hatters Case in which the haters union was sued for \$250,000. The union treasury was turned over to the boss and the homes of 140 union members were sold to pay the balance.

STUDY FOREIGN LAWS

Congressional Committees are busily at work studying legislation of other countries. It would be no exaggeration to assume that by now the capitalist politicians are experts on the anti-labor legislation which was perfected by German, Italian and Japanese imperialism.

The next Congress will reach a new high in anti-labor legislation. The major achievements established by the labor movement are now being challenged as never before. The labor movement will do well to remember that its gains were never handed down to it on a silver platter. Its every achievement is bathed in struggle and blood. Labor has no rights. At least none which aren't challenged every day. Labor will only preserve its gains by using the same methods it used to win them.

Labor must never give up its independent fight against the boss at the place it earns its livelihood. The 8 hour day, job security (seniority), improved working conditions and pay, free education, are merely by-products of labor's unceasing fight against the boss class. Thus an attack on labor's use of the strike weapon is a blow against the source from which all labor's gains spring. The answer to the labor-baiters must be an even more vigorous series of strikes (including sit-downs) at the point of production, supplemented by powerful defense squads and coordinated thru workers councils of delegates from every factory unit.

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WHAT WE STAND FOR

- 1—Capitalism can not be reformed. The profit system can only bring us more misery, hunger, war and depression.
- 2—We are therefore opposed to all reformist parties, including the Labor Party, which strive to merely patch up the present capitalist oppression.
- 3—We are for the revolutionary destruction of capitalism.
- 4—We are for a Revolutionary Marxian Party in the U. S. and a New Fourth Communist International, on a world scale, that will guide the workingclass to the establishment of Production for Use under a Workers Council Government.

(The full program of the Revolutionary Workers League is contained in its Programmatic Statement and the 14 Points of the Provisional International Contact Commission.)

NOTES

From far off South Africa comes a contribution of \$10.00 and a fraternal encouragement to the FIGHTING WORKER . . .

The Trade Union Educational League in Cleveland, Ohio has published an excellent two color printed leaflet during the coal-miners strike, entitled "Go To It, Miners". The address of the T.U.E.L. is P. O. Box 6693, Cleveland, Ohio . . .

R. W. L. speakers address the Social Science forum, 708 N. Clark St., Chicago, every first Saturday in the month . . .

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

NOVEMBER
WHY NO REVOLUTION
THE SOVIET UNION
FRENCH TROTSKYISM

DECEMBER
THE IMPENDING DEPRESSION IN THE U. S.
NO HOMELAND IN PALESTINE
WHY NO REVOLUTION (Part 2)

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Why We Must Overthrow Capitalism

The present period shows that even the most militant union and the most militant worker can gain no permanent security under capitalism. Despite all the promises of peace and plenty during the war, the average take home wages in manufacturing industries were cut by 8.5% from August 1945 to August 1946, because of shortened hours and reclassification of workers downward—this despite an average hourly raise of 14c. The cut was much deeper when you consider taxes that we now paid, which we didn't prior to the war, and the enormous rise in the cost of living—about 56% in food costs alone in the last five months.

Whatever the worker gains by his fighting he is forced to give back thru higher prices, state taxes, unemployment and other means. The capitalist state sees to it that we remain constantly the underdogs. Business this year will earn, after taxes, more than ever in history—30% more than last year. Labor, however, is having its living standards cut deeply.

Everyone of importance in the capitalist world is freely predicting a depression. The old capitalist cycle of crisis, depression, hunger and more war is already under way. Two million are unemployed; millions more will soon join the ranks. The government meanwhile keeps us

as underdogs because it can use armed police and armed force to keep us in chains.

We can't solve our problems under this system. We can only solve it by overthrowing the system. We must fight for economic demands at the point of production, but such strikes—to be victorious in this period—will have to be converted into political strikes against the capitalist government. We will have to defend ourselves with our own weapons of defense, workers defense guards. We will have to organize our workers unity, as the capitalists are united—into workers councils, with true workers democracy. We will have to counter capitalist terror with our own forceful defense. We will have to destroy every vestige of the capitalist state and its armed forces before we can even hope of achieving security. We will have to establish production for use under a worker's council government, rather than the present brutal production for profit under a robber baron's government. And above all we will have to build our own Marxian Party to give guidance and leadership to all these efforts.

Only Revolution can end capitalist insecurity and its wars.

Join the Revolutionary Workers League and help build a Marxian Party.

ANTI-COMMUNIST CAMPAIGN

The campaign against the "Communist Fifth Column" is reaching hysterical proportions. All news in almost every paper is slanted against "Communist Menace."

The Chicago Journal of Commerce has completed a long series of articles by Andrew Avery on the Communist Fifth Column. Life Magazine carried a long article by Professor Arthur Schlesinger on "The United States Communist Party." Forbes Magazine carried an article by William Casey with the same theme. From one end of the country to the other the hysteria against the "Communist Movement" is growing like wildfire.

Given a nudge by the State Department, the misleaders of Labor are busily engaged in red-baiting and red-purging. At the recent Steel Workers convention Phil Murray laid down the gauntlet to "Communism". The AFL convention was devoted almost entirely to red-baiting. The American Federation of Labor in California held a gigantic meeting of some 15,000 people in which they pledged a purge of all so-called communists.

The anti-communist campaign is not accidental or incidental. It is part of a well planned effort by the American Government which acts as a two-edged sword.

First: The campaign is aimed at preparing the United States for a future war against the Soviet Union. It is the ideological fore-runner of military measures.

Secondly: It is a smoke screen behind which the American Government can attack the trade union movement and its militant leaders. Mr. Casey in Forbes makes this adequately clear.

The anti-Communist campaign is not directed at the Stalinists alone. The Communist Party is attacked first because its patriotic position during the war makes it the most vulnerable.

The campaign will broaden to include any militant who is "curtailing production", "hampering reconversion", etc. The anti-Communist Campaign should be a warning to every worker that the capitalist government is preparing to unleash a reign of terror, both internationally and nationally; that it is preparing for future and more deadly wars abroad against the oppressed of the universe; and that it is preparing anti-working class measures of the most stringent nature at home.

ONLY REVOLUTION CAN BRING PEACE