

Croppers Ask For 30¢ an Hour

The sharecroppers and day laborers of Southeast Missouri, one of the most oppressed and exploited of all economic groups in the country, are now organizing themselves into locals of the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of America (CIO) around the demand they are raising of a minimum wage of 30 cents an hour. The cotton chopping season will begin in a few days and the men in Southeast Missouri are determined to fight for a minimum of 30 cents an hour.

After a period of comparative silence, Owen Whitfield, local UCAPAWA leader, has also come out in support of the demand for a 30-cent minimum in his speeches to the croppers and day laborers.

One of the locals—Local 313—has issued a leaflet appealing to Negro and white croppers and day laborers to fight together for 30 cents an hour. Its leaflet says: "We are asking all sharecroppers and day laborers to cooperate with us in our demand for a 30-cent per hour wage to meet the rising cost of living. This means that white and black workers must unite together to better our living conditions. . . . We want decent food and clothes to eat and wear and we cannot obtain it at the present wage. And we must have a living wage to meet the rising cost of living. We must win. And will win. Workers, please unite and join the union for our own welfare."

This demand, which the UCAPAWA local has issued, has aroused wide interest among the croppers and laborers. The landlords have also sensed the determination of the men to fight for a

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The Case of Senator Walsh

An Editorial

In a series of sensational, copyrighted articles the New York Post has carried on a campaign against "Senator X" who, according to that paper, was guilty of having had very close connections with a house of male prostitution in Brooklyn, which, it was also alleged by the Post, was owned by a Nazi agent, was frequented by leaders of a Nazi spy ring and was also used as a place to which to entice American sailors and soldiers presumably in order to gain military information from them. The owner of this homosexual dive, one Beekman, signed affidavits to the effect that "Senator X" had habituated his place.

While no explicit statements were made in the Post, the reader was given considerable room to infer that the visits of "Senator X" might not have been exclusively for recreational purposes and that the presence of Nazi agents might have had something to do with his visits.

Now we are in no position to know whether these charges are true or false. We are not even very interested in the moral aspect of the question. It would certainly disrupt the ordinary functioning of our national life to a disturbing degree if a senator were to be pilloried . . . merely for that!

But the political aspect of the question is of grave importance. And that was why a hue and cry was raised in Washington until the Post finally named Senator Walsh as the person against whom it had made the above charges. Walsh, a prominent member of the Senate "isolationist" bloc, promptly issued a stock statement calling the charge "a diabolical lie" but has thus far failed to go into any substantial detail.

THE PRESS CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE

What is really important and interesting is the treatment which this matter has received in the daily press. No daily paper, except the Post, has printed any comment on the sensational exposé. The stately Times, the sensational News, the Mirror, the sultry World-Telegram, the Journal-American, even the liberal-in-knee-pants PM, have said nothing.

Imagine what would happen if some labor leader were charged with some kind of "suspicious activity." Every capitalist paper would smear it over its front page. Look, for instance, how the press has distorted and smeared the campaign of the United Mine Workers to organize the dairy farmers.

Of course, the daily press merely continues its tradition of burying or refusing to print any material inimical to the capitalist class and its political representatives. It whitewashed, both by distortion and silence, the Merchants of Death whose recent activities in cooperation with Nazi Germany have just been discovered. Now it does the same for Senator Walsh.

Whether or not Walsh is guilty of the charges, the matter should be publicly aired. Too many capitalist leaders, too many capitalist politicians have recently been shown to be sympathetic toward or in contact with Nazi fascism to allow this incident to be buried in oblivion.

Ford Inst. Local Rejects Overtime Pay Cut Plan

In a stinging rebuke to the general officers of the United Electrical, Radio & Machine Workers of America (CIO), the membership of Ford Instrument Workers, Local 425, emphatically rejected the proposal to surrender overtime pay for Saturday, Sunday and holiday work falling within a consecutive five-day work period. At their meetings last Tuesday, all four shifts of the local carried the motion presented by the local's executive board to protect their union and living standards by turning down the general officers' proposal on Saturday and Sunday pay. There was a total of only five votes for the general officers' proposal.

Resentment against the national officers had been running high in this local of 3,000 members from the time that the proposal first appeared as an advertisement in the New York Times last March. Workers in the Ford Instrument plants felt that the general officers had made unwarranted use of union funds by buying advertising space in the reactionary Times to present a plan generally opposed by many UE members.

It was further felt that the proposed plan weakened the union and endangered the living standards of all workers. Realizing that they would lose 65

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LABOR ACTION

MAY 18, 1942

A PAPER IN THE INTERESTS OF LABOR

ONE CENT

Labor Unions, On Guard

AGAINST WAGE FREEZING!

Odell Waller Will Die—Unless...

On June 19, Odell Waller, Negro sharecropper from Virginia, is scheduled to die in the electric chair.

Waller, a young Negro whose case has become a cause célèbre, was convicted of first-degree murder by a jury of 10 planters, one carpenter and one businessman—all of them white poll taxpayers.

It is true that Waller killed a man. He never tried to deny that.

But a study of the conditions that led Waller to kill Oscar Davis will show that Waller is himself a victim of a system of oppression and inhumanity.

Odell Waller had tried desperately to eke out a living for his wife and mother by sharecropping on the Virginia estate of Oscar Davis. But it had been no go. So, one day in 1940, Waller had left the farm in desperation and gone to Baltimore in search of work. None was to be found.

Waller came back only to see that his family had been evicted from its shack. He went to landlord Davis, demanding that Davis give him his just share of a wheat crop they had jointly farmed. Davis refused. An argument ensued. Davis drew for his gun. So did Waller. Waller shot first.

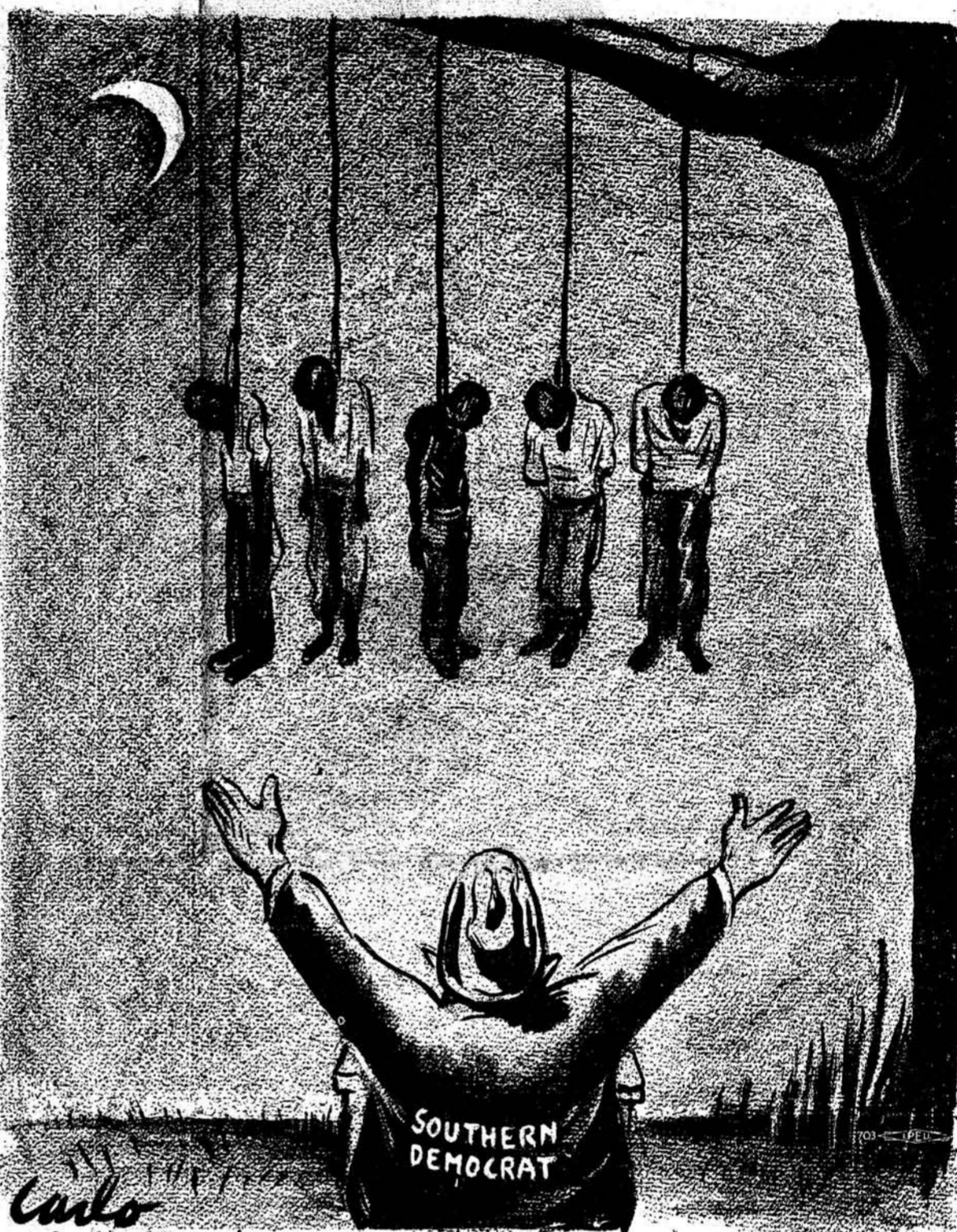
Waller did not have the kind of trial which every American is

supposed to have. He was not tried by a jury of his peers. He was tried by a poll tax jury. He was tried by a jury chosen by a system that excluded Negroes and poor whites who can't afford to pay poll taxes.

That was one of the grounds upon which the Workers Defense League, labor defense organization conducting the trial in behalf of Waller, claimed that

the Supreme Court should reverse the judgment of the lower courts. But the Supreme Court refused even to take the matter under its jurisdiction. It was too busy with other things. . . .

But the labor movement, the workers everywhere, cannot be too busy. Now, while there is still time: let labor's voice be heard in defense of Odell Waller!



Standard of Living Down To '32 Scale --Henderson

Further severe blows at labor's standard of living were struck in Washington last week. Following on the heels of President Roosevelt's seven-point economic program, analyzed in last week's LABOR ACTION as directing its main shafts against the working people of the country, the following were some of the blows struck at labor:

1) Leon Henderson, Federal Price Administrator and close associate of President Roosevelt, made a speech in which he predicted that the living standards of the American people would take a sharp dive downward. Said Henderson:

"It is probable that in the next 12 to 15 months we will get a civilian standard of living equivalent to 1932, which was the low of all lows during the depression."

2) Following that speech, Henderson took another crack at labor when he called for "wage equalization and stabilization." While he afterward clumsily tried to retreat with a denial that this meant wage freezing, it was apparent that that was exactly what he had in mind. For what he meant was that wages should not be raised—and that's a blow at labor which needs a wage raise to make up for the rising cost of living.

Would Freeze Wages

3) In the meantime, the outright spokesmen of reaction, lacking even the subtlety of President Roosevelt and his aides, began an outright campaign for wage freezing. The Ford Motor Co., in rejecting a demand of the United Automobile Workers (CIO) for a \$1.00 a day wage increase and coming out for wage freezing, gave the signal for a boss offensive to freeze the present state of wage poverty from which the workers suffer. Representative Gore of Kentucky promptly acknowledged the signal when he introduced a bill into the House of Representatives to freeze wages.

4) While all this was going on, a sham battle took place between the House Ways and Means Committee and the Treasury Department. The Treasury favored lowering income tax exemptions from \$1,500 to \$1,200 for married men and from \$750 to \$600 for single men as a means of getting more revenue. The House committee is reported by the New York newspaper, PM, as secretly favoring a sales tax. The irony of the situation is that both proposals would strike body blows at the poor;

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SWOC Holds Vital Convention This Week

Democratic Union Regime and Militant Labor Program Main Issues Facing Steel Workers

By DAVID COOLIDGE

The first constitutional convention of the steel workers called for May 19-23 in Cleveland is long overdue. These workers in the basic industry in the United States, dominated by the Morgan controlled United States Steel Corp., have had only an organizing committee for six years, or since the beginning of the CIO.

The whole steel organization of over half a million workers has been controlled from the top by Chairman Murray, MacDonald and a few regional and sub-regional directors. This made the SWOC a strange outfit in the CIO with its mass internationalists such as the UMWA and the UAW. This situation in the ranks of the steel workers also has been a source of much dissatisfaction. The continued concentration of authority in the top leadership, the use of the appointive power, the manner of negotiating contracts, made for bureaucracy within the union and tended to smother the development

of internal democratic procedure and practices.

Lack of Democracy.

The steel workers simply did not and could not feel that the SWOC was their union in the sense that the automobile workers could feel that the UAW was theirs. In the SWOC it was the appointed organizers who directed all operations. It was they, along with the higher officials and approved union officers who comprised the bulk of the delegates to SWOC conventions. Furthermore, these conventions were operated in a most bureaucratic manner: the usual democratic procedure of a UAW convention, for example, was always absent from a gathering of the SWOC.

There has been little or no educational work carried on and developed by the SWOC. Here again one can point out the vast gulf between the SWOC and the UAW. The trade union educational level of the SWOC is therefore woefully low.

Now that a convention is being

held to set up a real international union it is presumed that all of these defects and delinquencies will be corrected: that the delegates will leave the convention feeling that now they have a real

A New Race?

A new race of people will have to be bred in this country; people who can eat grass, exist without clothing, live naked in caves, or lit out in the ditches like wild animals. People who will work for others until they themselves drop dead of exhaustion, never uttering a word of protest against injustice, never daring to think that they have human souls or human rights.

Either such a race will have to be found or there must be another government.

From Torch, Irish labor paper.

powerful, democratic union that can do the job for them.

Whether or not this occurs will depend on several considerations. First, the quality of the delegates to the convention. Will the majority of the delegates really come from and be representative of the ranks of the organization? Just how far has the leadership gone in order to assure themselves that "safe" people are delegates to this convention?

Issue of Democracy

Next, will the convention be run in a democratic manner so that the real sentiment of all or any group of delegates will have proper and adequate chance to be expressed? This has not been the practice at former SWOC conventions.

Of course if the delegates are steel workers who really have their roots in the mills and among the workers, they will probably not be so easily turned away from insistence on their democratic rights. They will know that what is done

at this convention will require the utmost attention and scrutiny. This is a constitutional convention in a very important sense: it is a NEW BEGINNING for the steel workers and is of tremendous significance. A new constitution will be adopted at this time.

The constitution will be the fundamental law of the international. It will set forth the provisions for operating this large international union from top to bottom: duties and powers of the officers, how often conventions will be held, how delegates to conventions will be elected, the duties and authority of shop committeemen and shop stewards, salaries, joining fees and monthly dues. What measure of control the national officers will have over the affairs of the locals, what amount of autonomy the locals will have will be written into the new constitution.

And then there are such important matters as negotiations, the signing of contracts and the matter

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