

WORKERS' FORUM

Write to us—tell us what's going on in your part of the labor movement—what are the workers thinking about?—tell us what the bosses are up to—and the G-men and the local cops—and the Stalinists—send us that story the capitalist press didn't print and that story they buried or distorted—our pages are open to you. Letters must carry name and address, but indicate if you do not want your name printed.

'One-Third Housed' Will Stay That Way

Editor:

A newly completed project in South Boston, built under the local Housing Authority, has recently been purchased by the government for housing of "national defense" workers. This means that hundreds of families now living in sub-standard homes with inadequate light, heat and sanitary facilities, are to remain in these unhealthy places although they had already been notified that they were to move into the new project April 1st. Many had given notice to their landlords. The need for a housing project in this particular section of Boston is so blatant that civil groups composed of church officials and the like have been working for years to get such a project. And now the only sop the authorities give the workers in this area is a statement that another project will be built for them and perhaps in another five or ten years it may be ready for occupancy.

The report announcing the government purchase also stated that "this is part of the government's plan for more extensive defense utilization of USHA projects now nearing completion." It is well-known that the insignificant number of housing projects already built and under construction hardly touched the problem of housing the admitted one-third who are "ill-housed" in this country. Now even these are to be taken away and handed over to government employees comparatively well able to pay market rents for standard housing.

I would like to mention that the problem of housing "defense workers" does exist, and that landlords have taken great advantage of the workers who must be concentrated in a small area in order to get jobs in defense plants. However, as hard a problem as it is for these workers, and I know this from personal experience, it is nothing in comparison with that of families trying to live on much lower incomes.

Boston, Mass. B. WISE

Ten Workers Die In Fire-Swept 'National Defense' Factory

Was A Fire-Trap Because Boss Wouldn't Spend a Few Dollars; City and Federal Authorities Closed Their Eyes to Bad Conditions

NEW HAVEN, Conn., Feb. 5—Ten workers today paid with their lives for the greed of the bosses, as flames destroyed them in the flimsy firetrap factory building of the New Haven Quilt and Pad Company here.

Three other workers were seriously injured when they jumped from a third floor window to the ground below, unable to escape by any other way because the fire escape was blocked by huge blazing bales of cotton and the only other exit, a fire door, had been ordered closed by the factory superintendent to prevent spread of the flames, despite the fact that these thirteen workers were still in the third floor back room where the fire began.

The factory has been working night and day on an Army order for 578,000 comforters for the new conscript army. Most of these comforters have already been delivered to the Army.

But ten workers' families today are counting their losses in more than dollars and cents. The bosses can build a new fire-trap factory from their profits. But ten fathers, sons and husbands will never be replaced.

While the "Register" and "Journal Courier" (New Haven's only two papers, both owned by John Day Jackson, multi-millionaire and controller of both Democratic and Republican parties here) have begun to write that the coroner and no criminal negligence, the Socialist Workers Party of New Haven distributed a leaflet, pinning responsibility where it belongs, on the bosses and their stooges, the local and state politicians. The leaflet said in part:

We extend our deepest sympathy to the relatives and friends of the ten workers who were burned to death in the New Haven Quilt Company fire Wednesday morning.

Our sorrow makes it all the more necessary to state that these

Highlights In The Labor Press

By CARL O'SHEA

The AFL dual union, the American Editorial Association, boasts that Anthony Berard, one of the international vice-presidents of the CIO American Newspaper Guild, has quit the guild and joined the Chicago local of the Editorial Association. Chalk up another black mark to the AFL for trying to create a dual union in an industry dominated by the CIO Guild. If Guild members don't like the Stalinist policies of the Guild leadership, the place to work to change those policies is INSIDE the Guild.

The AFL Washington State LABOR NEWS reports that a Senator Roberts has introduced a bill to foist a \$5 poll tax on voters of the state of Washington. If American "democracy" continues to spread at this rate, the time will shortly come when only the employers can vote.

The CO-OPERATIVE BUILDER, weekly paper of the Northern States Co-op League, carries news of growing protest among Canadian farmers against the government's action in pegging produce prices. On January 10th some 2,000 angry farmers met in London, Ontario, to demand that the Dominion government "be fair to agriculture in administering the war burden." The farmers charged "that the government has fixed the maximum price of butter at three to four cents below current market prices, at a time when the farmer's price for butterfat is still low in comparison with his rising war-time costs of production. Bacon prices are also too low, the farmers charged. Efforts of Minister of Agriculture Gardiner to defend his actions failed to appease the farmers."

The Summit County LABOR NEWS for January 31 reports that the Goodyear Local of the Rubber Workers has served demands on the company for a general 10% hourly wage increase, and an upward adjustment of piecework rates considered by the union to be out of line with present living costs. Negotiations are now under way.

The tragic plight of nearly 3,000 residents in the 11th Ward sector of Cleveland, Ohio, site of a new low-rent housing project, is exposed by the Cleveland CALL POST, Negro weekly. Residents of the slum area face the double dilemma of wholesale water shutoffs and eviction. Approximately 3,000 sub-standard living units are being abolished and the tenants evicted, without considering the fact that there is not one-fifth that amount of living units anywhere available in the city.

Officials of the Iowa State Federation of Labor are sending throughout the nation appeals for support of the Des Moines Building Trades Council's stand not to permit union workers to work on war projects done under WPA, the Des Moines FEDERATION-IST for January 2nd reports.

Twin Cities Banquet Its 'Militant' Pluggers

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn. — The new six-page MILITANT was greeted Feb. 6 at a banquet attended by about 75 comrades of the Minneapolis and St. Paul branches. The inner-party banquet honored those comrades who sell and distribute our press and thus make possible the growth and influence of our press and our party.

Comrade Lee, master-of-ceremonies, opened the banquet by saying "We greet the 6-page MILITANT as a step toward a twice-weekly and then a daily. And we pay our respects to those who so faithfully see that our paper gets into the hands of hundreds of workers each week."

PARTY PRESS HISTORY Comrade Riley told of the history of the party press. As he spoke, he called attention to the display of party papers from the old Militant, beginning Nov. 15, 1938, the New Militant, the New International, the Socialist Call, the Socialist Appeal, Labor Action, to the FOURTH INTERNATIONAL and the MILITANT. His stories of the tremendous sacrifices made by the Left Oppositionists in the early years to get out the paper were moving.

Humorously he recalled that period when the Trotskyists entered the Socialist Party and we had to depend upon the innocuous Socialist Call for a few months, with its writings by Norman Thomas and the Reverend Roy Burt. "I'm thankful that the Militant and New Militant never had to disgrace its columns with such scribbling," he said. He also traced the history of our theoretical organ, told of how last April it was "filched from us by the porch-climbers" and how the FOURTH INTERNATIONAL was established.

PLANTING THE SEEDS Comrade Jones, in his talk on the party press, pointed out the unique nature of the banquet: that it was the first party banquet devoted solely to our press and to the group of comrades "who, with fine understanding and spirit have contributed to the development of the grand ideas of Marx, Engels, Lenin and our recently murdered Old Man. It is given to the comrades we honor tonight to take the printed word of our movement to hundreds and thousands of workers who, tomorrow and the next day, will be part of the vanguard that will overturn this rotten brutal capitalist system and usher in a decent and humane order."

The highlight of the evening was the presentation of the fourteen most devoted press distributors to the banqueters, and the response two of the distributors made to the chairman and the other comrades. Comrade Stanley of St. Paul, one of the best press salesmen, said: "Distributing our party press has its ups and downs. The cold nights and the abuse of unfriendly people are definitely the 'downs.' The friendly words of sympathetic workers and the requests for copies of the paper by union men and women are the

Join the Socialist Workers Party

ORDERED TO STAY

The doomed men might have escaped in the initial moments after the fire broke out, but they had remained on the orders of a foreman to attempt to save the bales of cotton. In less than five minutes the work room was a howling furnace, so quickly did the flames rage among the piles of exposed cotton and quilting.

One worker, who had escaped through the fire door before it was shut, pleaded with the foreman to open the door telling him that there were workers trapped in the room. The foreman rebuked him for "spreading rumors."

The building was an obvious fire trap. It was condemned about three months ago, it is reported, and three insurance companies had refused to accept insurance policies on it.

SPRINKLERS SHUT OFF There was an antiquated sprinkler system in the burned building, but workers from the first floor who rushed to the basement to turn it on, found that not only was the system shut off, but the main valve had been sealed. By the time six frantically working men could force open the valve

WHITEWASH INDICATED

Shortly after the fire was finally subdued, four separate investigations of the cause of the fire were announced. The FBI, the Army Quartermasters Office, the Municipal Detective Bureau and the local "Fire Marshall's" office have all announced probes.

Just what these "probes" will probably amount to is indicated by a statement of the County Coroner, James J. Corrigan, that an investigation of "sabotage" is being pushed.

The War Department must certainly have known what kind of a firetrap this plant was. It knew what the conditions were in which the workers worked, and any too close a probe might rebound to the discredit of the War Department, and show the kind of conditions the government is tolerating in the manufacture of war orders.

The ten bodies of the burned workers were recovered late tonight, charred beyond recognition. Two bodies were found near the closed fire door, two at the rear of the room, and four near the blocked fire-escape.

The entire plant was gutted at an estimated loss of \$50,000, a mere trifle compared with the

Hudson Men Penalized By Reuther and Thomas

DETROIT, Mich., Feb. 10. — The UAW-CIO International Executive Board showed the world how far from the path of unionism they have been pushed by the war scare, when they issued a statement signed by R. J. Thomas and Richard Frankenstein, condemning "mob tactics, wildcat strikes, stoppages etc." and apologizing to a Hudson Motor company foreman who was allegedly thrown out of the plant by a "mob" of union men.

The union officers agreed to punishment of a group of Hudson workers, accused of throwing the foreman out of the building, and the company has laid them off for four to six months without pay.

As if this is not severe enough for union militants who dare to take action, Thomas and Frankenstein go on: "The union hereby serves notice to all employees for the future that any recurrence of similar situations will not be tolerated or so lightly punished. Any future similar situations will subject the participants to summary dismissal if guilty and they will receive no protection from the union."

This is the second open and flagrant incident in which the Executive Board members of the UAW have sided with the company in disciplining a group of union militants. In the Fisher Body situation in Flint, 17 men were thrown out of the plant, deprived of all seniority, and, of their union rights, in just such a dirty agreement between the company and the Board.

UAW Asks Ford To Negotiate

Ford Says No And It's the Union's Move; Union Drive At Peak; It's Now Or Never

DETROIT, Mich., Feb. 7.—R. J. Thomas, UAW President, and Michael F. Widman, director of the Ford drive of the CIO, today demanded an immediate conference with Ford Company officials this week to bargain on several union demands.

In a letter to Ford, which asked for the collective bargaining conference "in order to avoid any necessity for a strike," Thomas and Widman demanded a working agreement to establish collective bargaining in Ford, a ten percent general wage increase, seniority rights, time and a half for Saturday and double time for Sunday work. Their statement reflected the enormous pressure put on the leadership by the surging ranks of the Ford workers who have been flocking into the UAW by the thousands.

Ford's answer to this demand was a flat and categorical "NO." Ford's spokesman said "the company will not take the trouble to reply to the union."

NOW WHAT? This leaves the union flatfooted without any recourse except to prepare for strike action. This is about the third time, in recent weeks that Ford has told the union to go plumb to hell. Each time Thomas and Widman bob up again, and go through the whole business again of demanding a collective bargaining meeting with the company, only to be received each time with greater scorn.

Queens Workers Make New Gains

By the Queens Correspondent QUEENS, New York City.—The workers of the Pepsi-Cola Company, organized under the jurisdiction of the International Association of Machinists, have succeeded in obtaining important gains in a new contract signed by the bosses.

The new contract continues the 8-hour day, 40-hours a week with time and a half for overtime. Overtime in excess of two hours and Sunday and holiday work will be paid at the rate of double time. The union gained a \$2 increase per week. Wage rates are raised to \$23 minimum for women and \$30-34 for men. All employees receive eleven legal paid holidays with pay and a week's vacation for those employed a year, two weeks for those employed for two years or more. Seniority rights are guaranteed. The workers at Pepsi-Cola ascribe their victory to the solid front they presented against the company in negotiations.

At the Anchor Cap Company, which manufactures bottle caps, the workers, likewise members of the IAM, are preparing to negotiate with the company for renewal of the contract which they gained last spring through strike action. In view of the unity between production workers and machinists they do not expect the trouble they had last spring when the company refused to concede an increase in pay, paid vacations, seniority rights, and immediate discussion of grievances until militant picket lines convinced the bosses a change in policy was in order.

At the Lily Tulip Cup Company in College Point, Long Island, the workers face a more difficult problem. Here the production workers belong to the Printing Pressmen, an AFL craft outfit, while the machinists belong to Local 295 of the IAM. Some concessions have been obtained from the company, but the split in ranks seriously



SCHEDULE OF CARLSON TOUR

Table with columns: Day, Date, Location. List of tour dates from Feb 14 to Mar 31 across various cities including Pittsburgh, Indianapolis, St. Louis, Memphis, Arkansas, Texas, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, Portland, Twin Cities.

MINNESOTA DOUBLE-CHALLENGES N.Y.

The telegraph wires are buzzing furiously with those Minnesota-New York challenges again. This time it's the SUB DRIVE in which our ace competitors are preparing to lead the party over the top.

Here is the latest taunt, from Minneapolis: "READING NEW YORK CHALLENGE OF 250 SUBS IN MEETING TONIGHT MET WITH LAUGHTER. MINNESOTA PLEDGES 500 SUBS BY APRIL 1st." We find it possible to say only one thing: quote YIPPEE! Unquote.

SCORE-BOARD ON SUBS TO DATE

Table with columns: City, Subs, Points. Lists scores for New York, Detroit, New Haven, Chicago, Newark, Minneapolis, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, St. Paul, Plentywood, Cleveland, Kansas, and TOTAL (34 Subs).

