

# THE MINE BATTLE

## Corruption in Illinois Union

By Joseph Angelo

Several things have happened lately in Illinois' mine fields. Among the more important is the struggle of the Fishwick-Farrington-Walker machine against the Lewis machine.

The renewal of this old struggle between the Illinois fakers and the Lewis gang began toward the end of the last miners' strike. The differences arose afresh on the question of how the Illinois miners were to be betrayed. At that time the Fishwick machine seemed to have come out victorious, Lewis' West Virginia-Kentucky ruinous policy lost, and the treacherous wage-cut policy of Fishwick accepted.

Immediately Lewis began a campaign to organize the Illinois miners, chambermaids and waitresses, by sending into Illinois hotels a crew of international organizers. Then the Fishwick machine backed John A. Walker, president of the Illinois Federation of Labor, as a candidate for Lewis' shoes. Lewis swung a right-hand interpretation of the miners' constitution and Walker went down for a count of ten.

The next place that we hear about this struggle is in the Peoria sub-district, where the Fishwick machine had expelled a dozen miners for slandering the honorable Mr. Fishwick. This time again, the lovable Mr. Lewis shoots a left hand interpretation of the constitution and back goes the Lewis dozen into the union. Then this same daily dozen that Lewis took under his fold runs on Lewis' program against the Fishwick sub-district flunkies and captures the whole sub-district.

Does Fishwick call for enough? Oh, no. Walker is Fishwick's side-partner with Farrington in reserve. Fishwick calls the Illinois miners into a convention at Peoria and takes a couple of verbal slams at Lewis and has the packed convention elect John A. Walker as an official of the Illinois union so that Walker may be eligible to run for Lewis' shoes at the next miners' convention.

Then Lewis comes back at Fishwick by sending into Illinois Colonel Samuel Pascoe, president of the defunct Kentucky district. This President Colonel Pascoe (he has a whole string of titles, more than can be remembered) moves around the Illinois hotels (and they are much safer than the hotels of Kentucky) and, of all things, this bird finds that corruption is going on in Illinois—in the West Frankfort sub-district.

An investigation proved that the Fishwick sub-district official flunkies took quite a bit of miners' money and property that should have gone into the pocket of Lewis. And this made Lewis pretty mad. First, there were fifty thousand dollars that were to be distributed among the miners in the West Frankfort sub-district of which only twenty thousand dollars can be accounted for by the sub-district officials. Second, there is the West Frankfort Labor Temple, the property of an abandoned local union deeded over to individuals—the officials of the sub-district. Third, there is the sum of thirty-two thousand dollars of another abandoned local union drawn out by the same sub-district officials.

Lewis demands of the West Frankfort sub-district officials to come to Indianapolis for an accounting. At once, Fishwick calls a conference of his board members, sub-district officials, also Walker and Farrington, in Decatur, as in Springfield there were too many organizers trying to organize the waitresses. At this conference, after much debating, Farrington's policy prevailed. Farrington proposed that the West Frankfort sub-district officials tell Lewis to go to hell, that in case Lewis takes the charter away from the sub-district, they must go into court and get an injunction against Lewis and fight it out in the capitalist court. Alright, but this would cost money and who is going to foot the bill in case they lose? This from the sub-district officials involved.

So the conference decided to create a "Red Fund" to the tune of ten thousand dollars. This money is to be used in the fight against Lewis but the miners were to be told that this money was used for the purpose of fighting against the Reds in the West Frankfort district.

Alright, the sub-district faker would not divide up the money and property with Lewis, so Lewis took away the charter from the sub-district and established a provisional sub-district with a set of his own henchmen. The old sub-district officers go into court and come out with an injunction restraining Lewis from interfering in their racket. Lewis then goes before another judge and has the injunction set aside and his henchmen are again put back in charge.

The convention of the Illinois Federation of Labor which will be held in Rock Island beginning September 9th, will see a renewal of this warfare, as Fishwick has been quite busy to see that a good representation of delegates from the miners locals are there—a most unusual thing, as in the past the Illinois miners showed no interest in the Federation convention. Fishwick, also, is billed as the main speaker for the convention.

The present struggle between Lewis and Fishwick is important not only to the miners of Illinois, but to the Communist movement as well. The Communist movement, instead of growing in this struggle, is continually losing ground, while the Lewis machine is growing by leaps and bounds. The Lewis machine is taking this fight into the local unions of Illinois—working through the local unions, and it has already captured not only two whole sub-districts but the sentiment throughout Illinois is much more favorable toward Lewis' machine than I have seen it for some time.

Fishwick is as yet propagandizing only through the *Illinois Miner* and circulars, with the result that he is losing ground. The Communist Party is using almost the same method as Fishwick, that is, they have forgotten all about the work inside the old locals of the U. M. W. A. Why, even Lewis is winning influence at the expense of the Communists.

In the West Frankfort trial to set aside the injunction, the Fishwick machine, in one of its contentions, charged that Lewis has made his peace with the leaders of the National Miners Union in Illinois and has the support of the Reds in the present struggle against Fishwick. This story has become very common on the street corners and the mines—that Lewis has the support of the Reds in the campaign against Fishwick. When such charges are made against the National Miners Union in a capitalist court, and they are not even denied in the *Coal Digger* nor even a leaflet on the situation, that is giving objective support to the most corrupt labor faker in the United States.

## NEW OPPOSITION Among the Russian Youth

The former leader of the Leninist Young Communist League of the Soviet Union, and a founder of the Youth International comrade Schatzkin, and comrade Sten, "Red Professor", have now been placed in the center of a sharp attack by the official organs of the Russian Y. C. L. The differences between Schatzkin-Sten and the League have undoubtedly assumed serious proportions and the two comrades have apparently found a strong circle of supporters, since even the *Rote Fahne*, official organ of the German Stalinists, is obliged to inform its readers about the new event. The American Party press lags behind as usual and furnishes no information whatsoever on the matter. Its readers will probably hear about it for the first time after the Stalin faction has taken some disciplinary measures against the new opposition.

Comrades Schatzkin and Sten voiced their critical conceptions in a number of articles in *Komsomolskaia Pravda*, organ of the Russian Y. C. L. The paper has been reprimanded for that and the sword has now been drawn in an article against Schatzkin and Sten. They have attempted to "unfold their notorious anti-Party conceptions" and "under the mask of 'seemingly' Left conceptions they have seriously approached the Trotskyist standpoint on the Party and Party discipline". Comrade Sten is upbraided for having sought, in an article "Up with the Communist Banner of Marxist Leninism", to liberate the Youth League from the influence of the Party. "He declares for freedom of opinion, free choice of political line for every Y. C. L. member. He wants every one to determine his attitude towards Party policy in his own way... that the political line shall be determined only on the ground of one's own experience, independent of the Party and its collective experience."

That is how the article in *Rote Fahne* presents the matter.

Schatzkin has become even more definite. And that is why anathema is hurled even more heavily at him.

"He is trying to disparage the value of the unanimity of the Party in the struggle against Trotskyism and against the Right opportunists. He doubts the political maturity of a great part of the Party. He maintains that the Party has sunk into philistinism. He declares that even tested Bolsheviks, who have behind them a hard school of revolutionary struggle, submit to Party decisions and fight for them not because of their revolutionary consciousness, not because of a firm conviction in their correctness, but as pure philistines who say Yes to everything decided by the majority. Comrade Schatzkin has decided to redeem the Party from this evil. In the form of a struggle against Philistinism he casts suspicion on the sincerity of the struggle against the Right deviation. Schatzkin believes that the victory over the Right was not achieved thanks to the politically correct line of the Party and its energetic defense against the Right opportunists, but thanks to the inertia and emptiness of the Party philistine."

The criticism of comrades Schatzkin and Sten apparently embodies a mood within the Y. C. L. that is not to be underestimated, and it is only too comprehensible that this mood against the bureaucratic spirit and its effects, against the complete deadening of any political life, should find expression precisely among the youth. The absolute compulsion to swing into line with official opinion, the unconditional recognition of the political conceptions of the leading bureaucracy, must arouse resistance in the youth. This phenomenon only confirms what the Oppositions has said for years about the consequences of the Stalinist regime and its inner-Party course. It is therefore no wonder that it seeks to kill Schatzkin and Sten with a mere formula: They are accused of "Trotskyism". Schatzkin and Sten were permitted to make their criticism only so long as it suited Stalin's "struggle against the Right". But now he has made a frank and sharp swing to the Right, as is shown by the recent decree on factory management, he can no longer tolerate such criticism. It is therefore declared: "The Party considers the struggle against the Right danger as its principal task. The articles of comrades Schatzkin, Sten and others remind us of the necessity of fighting on two fronts, that it, in the struggle against the Right, not to forget the struggle against the Trotskyist remnants, the traces of which come to light plainly in the irresponsible and injurious outburst of the above comrades."

Whether or not the new Opposition will draw the

# THE R. R. UNIONS

## A Split-up Labor Movement

By C. R. Hedlund

There are about 1,700,000 workers employed in the railroad transportation industry in this country. About one million of those workers are not organized at all, the remaining 700,000 are divided into 21 autonomous and helpless craft unions. Each one of these unions maintains its own set of officials, journals, headquarters, organizers and lodge halls; the most antiquated form of labor organization known. In no other industrial country in the world do we find the railroad workers divided into 21 separate unions and less than fifty per cent organized, and this in spite of the fact, that in no other country are the employers so well organized as they are here.

However, the economic conditions which gave rise to our present trade union structure on the railroads are gradually disappearing and this change naturally has its effect upon the unions. The ordinary railroad worker, and even the conductor and the engineer, are commencing to realize that the small and weak craft union, of which he is a member, is no longer a match for the gigantic combinations of organized capital. He sees the craft union falling down everywhere in the fight for better wages. These developments breed a growing demand for needed change among the workers, a change of program and organizational structure. Behind these proposed changes we find the growing minority of workers who study and think. Against this program we find arrayed the most useless, reactionary, and overpaid labor bureaucracy in the world.

The writer of this article is employed as locomotive engineer on a run between Minneapolis, Minnesota, and Elroy, Wisconsin. Elroy is a typical railroad terminal. There are thousands of such terminals in the United States and Canada. Outside of a small group of ordinary business men the entire town consists of railroad workers and their families. Yet, on account of the fact that the railroadmen are divided into 21 separate and distinct crafts, there is no labor activity of any kind in the town. There are no local lodges here because there are not enough members of each craft to maintain one. The men who belong to the union send their dues to the point where the local union is located, at Chicago, Duluth, or the Twin Cities, as the case may be. Thousands of railroad workers in the small terminals like Elroy never see the inside of a union hall. The railroad workers at Elroy, thanks to the craft system, have no labor hall, no labor meetings or activity of any kind. The town administration consist of a lawyer and a few business men, this in spite of the fact that the town is overwhelmingly working-class.

Yes, Elroy is a typical railroad terminal, where the railroad workers, as elsewhere, are victims of an obsolete system of labor organization. Elroy has no labor unions, no labor activity, either industrial or political, but it has a local organization of the American Legion, consisting of railroad workers and farmers, five or six churches, several "soft drink" parlors, pool halls and a moving picture show where the customary froth of sex and adventure is dished out to the working class.

Against these conditions in the railroad terminals and in the railroad unions the high salaried Brotherhood misleaders have no remedy save a program of expulsion of the militant minority, the growing left wing in the Railroad Brotherhoods.

Against this program of inactivity and reaction of the official drones, the left wing, which understands what is needed, has a definite program of organization, amalgamation and a formation of a Labor political party, instead of the useless legislative boards maintained for the special benefit of swarms of grafters who infested the Brotherhoods.

In Minneapolis the left wing in the Brotherhoods is making considerable progress. It has learned at least to a degree how to organize itself in local and union meetings behind a practical program of demands to the despair of the reactionary officials. These demands may be summarized as follows:

Amalgamation of the Engineers and Firemen; a joint organization drive conducted by the 21 craft unions coupled with a wage movement, backed by all the crafts, which will have for its purpose the raising of the minimum wage level in the railroad industry; a Labor Party instead of a Labor Lobby (the Legislative Boards); reduction of officials' salaries to the level of union wages, and to compel the B. of L. E. official to give an itemized account to the membership of the debts which the members are being called upon to pay by the levying of special five dollar assessments per month, etc.

More detailed treatment of our left wing work in the railroad Brotherhoods will be given in my next article to the Militant.

necessary and inevitable conclusions from its present criticism against the bureaucratic regime, remains to be seen. But whether it goes forward logically to the support of the Leninist Opposition, or capitulates weakly before the Centrist apparatus, the fact remains that its criticisms are an expression of the discontent and uneasiness over the present regime and its line that are growing among the Youth in particular. The next future will create even more divisions and deepen them. Stalin's sailless vessels cannot hold together in any political storm. Cut loose from the Left and from the Right, the Centrist apparatus is doomed to new splits and factional struggles.