

The Illinois Miners' Belleville Conference

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of Farrington and Lewis!

Now understand that as yet there had been no rank and file delegate that spoke from the convention floor. The volcano created by the wrong policy was beginning to smoke.

Watt's Speech

After the resolution that Toohey introduced was adopted John Watt was asked by Voyzey to address the convention. When Watt took the floor the volcano burst into a flame. And right here I want to say that I don't endorse everything that Watt has done, but I must agree with Watt that the position he took at this convention was correct. The first words that Watt uttered in his talk which lasted about 20 minutes was that the convention was not called to hear speeches but to outline a program and a plan of action for building the National Miners Union. He took Toohey's attack on the so-called "operators' neutrality" policy and showed with figures that Toohey distorted what he really said at the last Belleville conference. Watt showed with figures that the coal operators were caught off guard, that there is only a few weeks supply of coal on top, that this is the right time for the season to strike against coal operators and that we must make the most of the squabble between Lewis and Fishwick. Then he criticized the leadership of the Communist Party for trying to isolate him from working among the miners and all those not members of the Communist Party.

Watt made a plea for Soviet Russia, for the Russian Communist Party, but launched into a bitter attack against the leadership of the American Party, using the latest issue of the *Imprecor* (the speech of Losovsky at the 10th Plenum on trade union work) for his attack. Watt said that he considered himself a Communist despite anything that the C.P. may say to the contrary and concluded his talk by urging the miners to build a class conscious and militant union. While Watt was speaking, Foster came into the convention hall and went on the speakers platform, but something went wrong as there was no demonstration from the convention of any kind. As soon as Watt finished his talk, Voyzey turned to Foster and began to say something, but the delegates, one after another, began to make motions for adjournment for lunch. The time was 1:30 p.m. and so the convention was adjourned for lunch.

The afternoon session was convened with Voyzey saying that the convention is now thrown open for discussion from the delegates. But Voyzey failed to mention the fact that the discussion must come only from Communist Party members. So the first discussion that comes from the floor saw Corbishly, Slinger, Thompson, Voyzey and Allard on the floor with almost the same speech with little variation: "I am a Communist, Watt is a faker." Rat-tat rat-tat-tat—just like that one after the other. I tried to get the floor after Thompson spoke but the Stalinites were able to carry a motion to cease debate by a vote of 67 to 30. Then the motion made previously that Watt's case be referred to the national executive board with final decision to rest with the international convention was carried with the same vote.

After the vote was taken and while Foster was being introduced, about 20 delegates arose and walked out of the convention in protest against the action of not allowing more discussion from the floor. Foster thought that Watt had walked out with the delegates and started to attack Watt for the walkout, but after Watt protested against such a line of attack, Foster changed his speech, and spoke about Gastonia, the T. U. U. L., etc.

Angelo Urges Bolters Return

I listened a few minutes to Foster's speech and then went out of the convention hall to see what had happened to the delegates that had walked out. The delegates that had walked out had all gathered near the entrance of the convention hall with a few Stalinites among them like Sklar and Kemenovich, calling the delegates who walked out fakers, etc. I urged all the delegates to return and help finish the business. My plea was met with: "No, we're done with the convention, we're going home."

I went into the convention and Foster had finished his speech and a resolution calling upon Watt "to cease all activities among the miners of Illinois" was introduced by Corbishly who moved the adoption of the resolution. I moved an amendment to the resolution and pointed out that it was not on trial at this time but that his case had been referred to the national executive board and the international convention. My motion was voted down and the resolution adopted with a few nays. Immediately after the vote nine delegates walked out; this time Watt went along.

McMillan, Goldberg, Payer (of the St. Louis branch of the Communist League) and myself immediately got together and walked out before they scattered without. We rented a room in the Lyric Hotel and told all the delegates that bolted the convention to go there for a meeting. While the delegates were going to the new hall, I personally went to Foster and told him that we had organized the delegates that bolted the convention, that the crazy "Left" policy of attacking everyone who was not a Communist as a faker and the machine rule at the convention was responsible for the walkout of the delegates, that the delegates who bolted represented the majority of the National Miners Union. They had serious differences with regards to the incorrect line of the C.P. that is being pursued in Illinois, especially the uncalled for attacks in the mining fields on the leaders of the National Miners Union in Staunton, Livingston, etc., who are not Party members. They are told that unless they join the Communist Party they will be slaughtered and deprived of all work in the National Miners Union. I told Foster that these delegates had a grievance because of the mistakes the Party had made in the Illinois mining fields and that he should come into our meeting to hear of these mistakes committed by the Party for the purpose of changing these incorrect policies before it is too late.

Foster came into our meeting and the delegates began to protest against the actions of the convention for not allowing thorough rank and file discussion on the floor of the convention, protested against the attack on Watt, protested against the C.P. organizers trying to intimidate non-Party miners by threats to carrying out Party orders, against the narrow line of the Party in trying to build not a mass organization out of the N.M.U. but a narrow sect of C.P. members.

Foster's answer to all the protests was his usual one: "Yes, but let's not talk about these things now. All you delegates must come back into the convention, else the capitalist papers tomorrow will say that there was a split in the N.M.U." The delegates said they did not care what the capitalist papers said about them. Before they went back into the convention the uncalled-for resolution attacking Watt must be withdrawn. If that was not done they would go back home, double their work in building the N.M.U. and change the incorrect line being pursued in the N.M.U. They would fight for a policy that would unite not only Communists but also the backward workers into the N.M.U.

After Foster left our meeting, I was elected chairman and the following decisions were made by the 30 delegates present:

1. That we fight and organize the miners into the N.M.U.
2. That we protest the action taken against Watt.
3. That we call a conference of the Staunton sub-district on Sunday, November 3, at Staunton, Ill., for the purpose of mobilizing the miners into the N.M.U.

After the meeting every delegate pres-

ent pledged that he would go home and do all in his power to build the N.M.U., to clean out the Lewises and the Fishwicks.

A few words in general about the convention and the future work in the new unions created by the C.P. The bolting of the delegates from the convention was a spontaneous rank and file revolt against the narrow line being pursued by the C.P. in its trade union work. And further, if the Communist League comrades had not been on the job, the delegates would have gone home discouraged and it would have had a very bad effect on the work of building the N.M.U. in Illinois. Our Opposition forces organized the delegates that walked out of the convention and I am correct in saying that our group prevented a split in the N.M.U. and put new life into the rank and file delegates, to fight to build the N.M.U. and change the incorrect policy in the union as framed by the C.P. leaders.

The C.P. did not analyze correctly the situation in Illinois and overestimated its own strength in the coal fields here. What happened before the convention was that the N.M.U. took a sudden surge forward, due to the squabble between Lewis and Fishwick and hundreds of miners joined the N.M.U. in the last two months. The C.P., instead of educating these new members to understand Communism, is trying to force these workers in the N.M.U. by "direct action" to belong to the C.P. or else tell them that they would be prevented from working in the N.M.U. If this is not sickness of some kind, I am Holy Moses. The slogan seems to be: Every N.M.U. member must be a Party member!

Stalinism and Union Democracy

Another impression I got from the convention in Belleville is that no opposition of any kind will be tolerated in the new unions created by the Party. They will be ruthlessly attacked whether right or wrong, even if the Party has to split the new unions wide open. This is part of its general policy to wipe out all opposition instead of trying to win over the opposition to its policy. This was clear to me in the Belleville convention when the first 20 delegates walked out in protest against the bureaucratic and incorrect policy of the C.P. (all speeches, no discussion, etc.)

I repeat, this was a spontaneous rank and file revolt. It was beginning to look very bad from the Stalinite line. Somebody would be blamed for the revolt. Let's make it Watt and thereby save a spanking by Stalin. Fine. Typewriter gets busy. Out comes a resolution against Watt. The second walkout was in protest against the action on Watt. I believe that if the first walkout of delegates had not occurred, the resolution against Watt would never have been read. The rank and file revolt became the "real danger" in the convention and someone had to be blamed in order for the Stalinites to save their own hides.

To the convention the credentials committee reported that 16,000 members were represented. In the committee's deliberations, they figured 8,000 members and if we cut this last figure in half we will come pretty close to the actual membership of the N.M.U. in Illinois. The delegates that revolted represented the strongest section of the union—Staunton-Livingston-Mt. Olive-Springfield section, the membership of which is close to half the total of the N.M.U. in Illinois.

The Daily Worker Lies Like Hell!

A Letter Sent by the Staunton Miners' Conference to the Poison Pen Artists

The following self-explanatory letter has been sent to the Daily Worker for publication:

Staunton, Ill.
November 14, 1929
To the Editor of the Daily Worker
New York City

In compliance with a motion unanimously adopted at the sub-District Conference of the National Miners Union, held at Staunton, Nov. 10th I ask you to retract the following false and slanderous statements pertaining to International President Watt and members of the Staunton Local of the N.M.U., which appeared in the various issues of the Daily Worker as noted:

Oct. 31—"Rank and file will fight to oust him."
Nov. —"Watt is trying to establish splitters headquarters."
Nov. 7—"Telegrams received at Staunton condemning Watt."
Nov. 8—"Watt issues convention call."
Nov. 9—"Watt built up a little machine in Staunton."

Nov. 9—"Watt, without authority from anyone, came to Staunton."

Nov. 9—"Slinger, the man who built organization in Staunton."

Demands Retraction

While these excerpts do not cover all the accusations placed against Watt and the Staunton members, they are those of the most importance and I insist that they be printed in your publication with the accompanying explanatory letter.

In order to give you the true facts, it will be necessary for me to revert to the Belleville National Miners convention. While that convention was heralded as a rank and file convention, the outcome proved just the opposite. It is true that a number of delegates left the convention hall, and some among that number, were men who helped organize the old United Mine Workers many years ago. These men left the hall, not because of the influence of President Watt, as some seem to believe, but for the reason that they possessed sufficient intelligence to think for themselves. In other words, it

was a spontaneous uprising against the wrong political propaganda. They had come to the convention for the purpose of building a rank and file union and nothing else. To prove my assertion, the convention had been in session almost two days, practically no sion from the rank and file was heard, only speeches and more speeches. All for a purpose. But of little or no interest to the membership.

The proceedings of the convention plainly show that business that would ordinarily require days of discussion were accomplished in the last few hours. The reports show that all resolutions were adopted unanimously. Surely some opposition would appear under ordinary circumstances. I have attended many labor conventions in the past, and must admit, some were machine controlled, but the Belleville convention was unrivaled in efficiency.

While I realize that the Daily Worker represents the aims and objects of the N.M.U. leadership, however, if these aims are correct, then surely it is not necessary to publish false and slanderous statements against individuals. President Watt is accused of establishing splitters headquarters, not by the rank and file, as your paper tries to show, but by a certain group who seems to imagine that it possesses super-intelligence.

Everyone who dares to differ with it is called an opportunist. I might say that every delegate from Staunton local, without exception, reported unfavorably towards the Belleville convention. After the reports a resolution was unanimously adopted, condemning the actions employed at said convention. You say, "the rank and file will fight to oust President Watt." The writer of this article attended every session held by the Staunton local, but failed to see this materialize although he does see the Staunton local all but wrecked, due to what took place at Staunton.

Daily Worker Falsehoods

At the Sub-District Conference held in Staunton, Sunday Nov. 10th I read the following, which appeared in your paper issued Nov. 6th, "Livingston local bars renegade Watt and his henchmen, etc." After reading the article, I asked every delegate from Livingston if that were a fact. Every delegate stated that it was not, and that Watt had not been barred by their local.

Under date of Nov. 7 issue—"Telegrams received at Staunton condemning Watt." By whom were these telegrams received? I have had charge of all official documents of this local since its inception, and can say without fear of contradiction, I have neither received nor seen such telegrams.

Issue of Nov. 8th—"Watt issues convention call." This again proves to be a fabrication, as the convention call was issued under instructions of the Sub-District Conference Committee.

Issue of Nov. 9th—"Watt built up a little machine in Staunton." In answering that accusation I shall say, Watt did not build up a machine, but he did help to build the strongest and most active local in the N.M.U. Yes, he did more! Besides doing splendid work in other sections, he was the main factor which caused Livingston as well as Pocahontas locals, to grow with tremendous rapidity. In the same issue you say, "Watt without authority from anyone came to Staunton. Another falsehood. The records of the Sub-District Conference Committee plainly show that Watt at various times was ordered to come to Staunton to address meetings in his vicinity. I might further state that this Sub-District Conference Committee is a committee composed of miners elected from their respective locals. A real body of the rank and file. In the same issue you say, "Slinger, the man, who built organization in Staunton." It is unpleasant to cast any reflections upon Slinger as I well understand that he must make a record, if he expects to remain a member of the C.E.C. of the Communist Party. However as far as Slinger was concerned he is a negligible factor in Staunton, as his presence here is far from welcome. I could continue to expose many more malicious lies, which were circulated thru your press as well as other sources, but that will not build a Rank and File union. A retraction and the publishing of this letter will do much towards creating a solidarity among the miners, which is absolutely necessary if the National Miners Union expects to succeed. I hope you will give this matter the same publicity as you gave the misleading statements.

EDW. C. MORGAN
Sec'y Sub-District Conference
National Miners Union



AN AUTHORIZED STATEMENT

We have been authorized to state that the little banquet given to the erstwhile Communist Party candidate for Mayor in New York, William W. Weinstone, on the eve of his departure to become the American representative to the E.C.C.I., was not in the nature of an "official" victory celebration.