

# The Illinois Miners' Battle

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From the Lewis-Fishwick-Farrington machines, jointly with the coal operators, will be launched an increased campaign against Communism and against Communist leadership in the union. In any event for a worker to fall victim to such a campaign, to accept it, is to strengthen the hold that crooks and fakers gain upon the unions.

Communist leadership of the union means leadership by the most advanced working class section, the one which is most responsive to the true interests of the rank and file. That is always correct. But it must be established on the broadest possible basis with the constant active collaboration of all honest Left wing and progressive elements. Particularly must it be based on correct policies and that is not yet the case in the National Miners Union.

The strike and what preceded it, is the best illustration of this contention. The lack of thorough strike preparations and concentration on outstanding strike issues failed to bring out the most decisive section in the southern part of the field. The campaign of artificial issues raised against Watt, the national president ending in his arbitrary removal, initiated by the Party leadership, almost split off and certainly discouraged the whole Staunton section. The representatives from that sub-district at the last N. M. U. Belleville district convention saw in that campaign only the worst features of machine rule. They objected, but to no avail, and thus it became a campaign against them. Hence this section, which had been among the best supporters and the best fighters before, this time practically failed to respond.

## Foster on Strike Strategy!

On the question of preparation for strikes of unorganized workers (which is the case in this instance) Wm. Z. Foster says in his pamphlet "Strike Strategy":

"Less and less can the strike strategist depend upon the spontaneity of the masses to bring them into revolt against their exploiters, more and more he has to figure on substantial preliminary organization, conceived planfully and carried through almost like military strategy. Within the past fifteen years American employers have become very able and skillful in checking spontaneous mass revolts amongst their workers. To this end they have developed a whole arsenal of weapons which may be summed up under the general heads of concessions, of duplicity and terrorism".

And further: "In impending strikes of unorganized workers, conservative labor leaders habitually overestimate the importance of organization and underestimate the spontaneity of the workers. They smother the fighting spirit of the workers by a dry-as-dust campaign for excessive organization. On the other hand, a common tendency of left wing leaders is to underestimate the necessity for a certain degree of preliminary organization and to depend too much on the spontaneity of the workers. The result is abortive strikes. The history of the I. W. W. is full of such mistakes." (My Emphasis.—A. S.)

This is as true now as when it was written, and it is precisely the policy which was not followed by the Communist Party

leadership in the Illinois miners strike. For the miners it becomes essential to fight to correct such mistakes.

## Fishwick's "Progressivism"

The immediate result of the break-up of this strike will be a strengthening of the Lewis-Fishwick-Farrington control of the situation. That, however, can only be a temporary setback, because of the role played by this gentry itself. The Fishwick-Farrington combination in its present fight for the spoils with the Lewis machine is cunningly taking on a somewhat "progressive" veneer, hoping thereby to fool the miners into support for them. They have received favorable publicity by the Socialist Party, which since its New York election "victory" has become more ready to align itself with the capitalists and their hangers-on. The leading Musteites have already publicly cast their lot with this combination thereby showing that the their coming into being was decidedly a reflection of growing working class dissatisfaction even within the conservative unions, these self-styled progressive leaders are already beginning to merge with the reactionary bureaucrats.

To the Left wing this can mean only one thing and that is, simultaneously with the building of the National Miners Union, to organize Left wing sentiment within the old union so much more energetically. Taking advantage of this latest exposure of the strike-breaking activities of the Fishwick-Farrington combination a genuine Left wing and progressive movement should be built of all favorable elements within the U. M. W. of A., where is still has a mass organization. All opportunities should be utilized to more effectively propagate united struggle of all rank and file miners for their interests, and thus help prepare for the next open battle.

Persistent organization work of building the National Miners Union and preparation for future strikes is now particularly necessary, not merely sporadically in certain sections but as far as available forces and conditions permit on a national scale. But above all correct policies are essential as a guide to correct action.

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## A COMMUNITY CHEST DRIVE

### Hi-jacking Labor in Texas

HOUSTON, Tex.—R. E. Kennedy, former employe of the Lone Star Creamery Co. of Houston, refused to join the company's 100% club to donate a dollar to the Community Chest. The company fired him, took the dollar out of his wage anyway, and refused to give it back to Kennedy. Two days after being discharged he went to the office with his pistol, aimed it at an official of the company. Thoroughly frightened he gave up the stolen dollar.

The company had Kennedy arrested, charged with assault to murder, robbery with firearms and carrying a pistol. The case was carried to the grand jury where the charges were no-billed.

Nearly all the big industries around Houston resort to these methods to fill the community chest. Workers are afraid not to donate for fear of losing their jobs.

# The McAlester Mine Disaster

Few more tragic stories will have been told in the entire year of 1929 than that of the mine explosion at North McAlester, Okla., and its aftermath. Lives of 59 coal diggers were snuffed out when the spark of a coal cutting machine ignited a gas pocket. For the 59, the troubles of existence in a low-wage, non-union industry are over, but for the dependents there is added to the loss of their breadwinners the desolation of a future shrouded in destitution.

Oklahoma's workmen's compensation law makes no provision whatsoever for the widows and orphans of men killed in industry. They are expected to go into court, hiring lawyers to prove negligence by the company. How negligence can be proved when nearly every man in the mine was killed is something the Oklahoma legislators probably never thought of.

The coal diggers were for the most part Negroes and Mexicans, reports a Federated Press correspondent who passed through the field last autumn. Thirty five of the victims were Mexicans. The union is only a memory in Oklahoma and wages have been cut to the level of the bankrupt farmers, whose 1929 crop was a complete failure.

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## POOR SCABS!

### Coal Co. Raises Rent

BROUGHTON, Pa., (F.P.)—Scab miners get it coming and going from the Pittsburgh Terminal Coal Co. which went nonunion three years ago. Rent of the company houses in Broughton has been jumped \$2 a month. Miners now pay \$10 or \$12 a month for company shacks of four rooms without running water and unfurnished. The rent used to be \$8 or \$10. Streets are unpaved but there is electric light. The scale has been trimmed as follows:

Day labor which used to get \$7.50 a day under union conditions now gets \$4.25 and around the mine on top as low as \$3.50 a day. Miners paid by the ton have been cut from 77c a ton to 55c. Pick miners get 77 a ton instead of the union scale of \$1.11.

"And there's been another cut besides." a staunch union miner now forced to work under scab scales tells Federated Press. "We ain't got no checkweighman anymore. I can figure from my own loading experience for 20 years that the company is cheating us from 10 to 20% on the weights. They stick us for deadwork (removing slate, etc.) also. They got us every way."

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## MORE HOOVER PROSPERITY

### Southern Sawmills Shut Down

By Jack Mette

COLLETON, S. C.—The first thing that I heard when a dropped off the jerk-water passenger train in this little lumber camp village of the Colleton Cypress Lumber Co., a subsidiary of the great Ritter interests, was that they were cutting off men.

"We have been told by the boss that we might as well check out and hunt us another job," one of the mill employes explained. "The Ritters own eight or ten big saw mills in this part of South Carolina and they say that all of them will close on the first part of December and that more than 400 families will be thrown out of employment and that's not counting the unmarried men. They say that they might reopen in April or May and then again they may not, but that they would advise us to hunt other employment."

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## INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS MOUNT

ALBANY—Although the advent of winter usually brings a decrease in the number of fatal industrial accidents, November showed a total of 174 deaths, the New York state labor department reports. The 63 deaths in construction work were responsible for the increase, being the largest for any month of 1929. Falls from scaffolds and ladders killed six. Falling bricks and planks killed seven and cave-in of excavations killed three.

Five workers were killed by exposure to gas fumes and other poisonous sub-

stances; one man drank poison by mistake; the metal in some way ran past the stopper and set fire to his clothing. A painter cleaning with steel wool caused spontaneous combustion; electric shocks caused the death of three; a fireman's assistant was cleaning out the ashpit when the blowoff pipe in the boiler blew out, enveloping him in flames and steam; a gasoline lantern exploded in a sleeping car and in the resulting fire a laborer was burned to a crisp.

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