

Printers' Privileged Position Doomed

Revolutionary developments in the printing of your newspaper may within the next decade swallow up the jobs of thousands of union printers, and within a quarter century relegate a craft dating from Gutenberg's days to the pages of history books.

Two Threats to "Labor Skill"

From two sides come mechanical threats to the army of printers who operate typesetting machines. One is the teletypesetter which substitutes John Robot for the man at the linotype. Another is the photo composing machine which entirely scraps both typesetter and typesetting machine. Both processes were reviewed before the recent publishers convention in New York by Frank E. Gannett, owner of a chain of dailies and owner of the teletypesetter process.

Gannett now boasts that his robot typesetter has been at work in a small Illinois daily newspaper for six months. "At last," he said, "it is now ready for the market. A large number of machines are now going through the factory and the complete outfit will soon be available to publishers."

The machine is operated by a perforated tape produced by a machine printer for receiving telegraphed news. The machine printer itself displaced the Morse code telegraph operator. To begin with the teletypesetter will handle stock quotations and sports bulletins, but Gannett foresees the day when the complete newspaper, including wire and local news, will be teletypeset. "The teletypesetter tape," he said, "can be transmitted with greater rapidity and the composing machine acts with greater accuracy than a hand operated machine."

The only worker left when teletypesetter gets going will be the linotype machinist. But even he will lose his job if Gannett is correct in saying that "I feel confident that some day photocomposing will displace metal casting machines." This device will photograph columns of type as they are set on a machine similar to a typewriter, backed by camera apparatus. The plate will then be engraved and given to the pressmen.

May Scrap Pressmen, Too

Revolutionary departures that will scrap press room workers are also foreshadowed in the prediction of Owen D. Young of General Electric that you will read your morning or evening paper through a device in the living room, operated by wireless mechanism.

The International Typographical Union facing in the 5-day week demand its stiffest battle since 1922 when it fought out the issue of the 44-hour week in job plants, must reckon on a new type of strike-breaker in the robot designed by Gannett and now in actual operation. If the pressmen and other printing trades unions will follow the union policy of working while the printers are on strike, publishers will be able to make shift temporarily while assembling scab crews.

Meanwhile the scab recruiting goes on apace, according to reports by Chairman H. W. Flagg of the "open shop" division of the American Newspaper Publishers Assn. and Chairman Harvey J. Kelly of the special standing committee. Kelly speaks of "special defense preparations" undertaken by the committee, which are said to have caused many printers unions to relinquish 5-day week and other demands. In both Lawrence Mass. and Hamilton, Ont., these "defense preparations" were undertaken.

Discussing the 5-day week, Flagg says: "In all cases involved where the newspaper has prepared in advance to take care of its publication in any case, a new agreement has been reached with demand for the 5-day week eliminated."

STREET CAR MEN DEMAND 6-DAY WEEK
PITTSBURGH—This city is wondering whether it will walk or ride after May 1. 2,800 car men turned down a proposal of the Pittsburgh Railways Co. to replace the expiring wage agreement.

THE SEAMEN'S CONVENTION

Bureaucracy Perfected!

About 118 seamen and longshoremen, the finest representative body of workers that have ever come together on South Street wound up the marine workers' convention last week after a two days' sitting.

There was no lack of enthusiasm. In fact this very enthusiasm prevented the seamen and longshoremen from taking the problem of building their industrial union into their own hands, a task which they proved, throughout the sessions, to be more than capable of handling.

Johnstone's Manipulations

But in the noise of their enthusiasm they failed to consider the manipulations of the T. U. U. L. leaders as represented mainly by Johnstone who was bent with all his "eloquence" upon preventing the seamen from taking control of the convention. This was clearly shown, for example, when a motion came from the floor in accord with procedure, for the election of a national secretary, the opposition to Mink being unanimous. A "well-trained" Party member, whom the writer knows to be in ardent opposition to Mink, took the floor and amended that this task be left to the incoming national committee. Opposition to this insincere amendment was demonstrated in the heated discussion that followed when it appeared that it was getting out of control and a few Party members made only half-hearted stands for the motion, the big gun of the convention, Johnstone, rose to explain to the delegates the meaning of "centralized democracy", a phrase with which many miners, textile workers and needle trades workers have become very well acquainted in the last few years of Party mechanical control.

The writer was very much impressed on meeting one of the Party members after the convention who, in an apologetic tone, said: "Well, we had to do it (that is, support Mink) or it would have gotten out of the hands of the Party!"

Johnstone, in pointing out why no officials should be elected from the floor, stated that it was so easy for some one to get into a position of power that he could in the course of time, with the greatest ease, divert the organization into reactionary channels. The test of this shameful proclamation of the legalized bureaucracy can be seen in what the associated Johnstones have made out of the Left wing miners, textile and needle trades unions—shadows and wrecks.

It further shows the great fear the Party leaders have of the workers, contrary to the radicalization characteristics of the period which they claim to have analyzed so thoroughly, and which says correctly enough that we are in a period of sharpening class struggle when the militant elements of the working class come to the fore. What Johnstone fears is precisely these elements. Isn't the program and constitution of the T. U. U. L. leadership strong enough and clearly applicable to the period? Isn't the functioning of Commun-

ists in the union and its leadership, organized in fractions, good enough guarantee for Johnstone? No, he has to have one million person, brass-bound, choking control. The Party, after four years, was afraid to trust leaders from the delegations like McGrath, Harvey, Morgan and Hegezy, who were popular at the convention, and had proved by their activity in the ports that they are able to work without Johnstonian wet-nursing.

Organization a la Mode

Another outstanding feature of the convention was the obvious ignorance of the industry shown by Johnstone. Instead of simplifying the enormous task with which the convention was confronted, he proceeded to complicate matters so that no delegate could conceive just how they were to set about building the new union.

He proposed as one of their main tasks to organize a Negro section, a women's section, a youth section, and repeatedly stressed their importance. This will appear good in the Daily Worker, splendid in the T. U. U. L. and Party minutes, magnificent in the Executive Committee of the C. I. and the R. I. L. U., but ridiculous on the water front. But Johnstone is superior to such little matters as the waterfront, or else he would have known much better.

The Party fraction did not do itself proud at all. Most of the comrades are inexperienced, since the older ones have been driven out or become disgusted. No attempts have been made at training or educating the comrades; none is needed, most likely in the Third Period. It was comical, if it were not so tragic, when it came to the election of delegates to the R. I. L. U. Congress. The ones in greatest opposition to Mink approved of the slate previously drawn up. Can Mink contribute anything at the Congress? It is doubtful if even Mink believes that. But the faithful must be rewarded. Nobody must be allowed to think or act independently of the Party lash, for they might begin to think of how they are being used as chess men by the Party bureaucrats, instead of the Party working in fraternal harmony with the union.

The seamen and marine workers have had an "educational" meeting, but not a convention. They could learn from the sessions that so long as the T. U. U. L. leadership oversteps the boundaries of legitimate relationships to the unions affiliated to it, by not allowing it the necessary possibilities to develop initiative and elbow room to function as a real union of workers in the industry, instead of an advertisement for the latest Party line, there will be a cancer eating away at the organization from the beginning. The further realization of its aims, the organizing of the marine workers for a fight against the ship-owners, will be seriously hindered without the establishment of these proper relations between leaders and ranks, union and Party.

—JOHN HORN

200 Men Control U. S. Industry

Concentration of power over the living conditions of 120 millions of people in the hands of less than 200 men was revealed by Senator Burton K. Wheeler, Democrat, in a speech before the National Democratic club. Wheeler quoted a banker as saying:

"In my estimation about 50 or 60 large companies in this country, each controlled by two or three men, do about 80%, through their various subsidiaries, of the industrial business of this country. There are hundreds of thousands of small corporations and individual business men in this country, but taken together they do only about 20% of the country's industrial business."

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ILLINOIS JOBS MUCH SCARCER THAN A YEAR AGO

CHICAGO—For every available hundred jobs in Illinois in February there were 245.6 persons ready to take them, according to the state employment office. This was a slight improvement over January when 257.2 persons wanted every available hundred jobs but it was very much worse than February 1928. At that time the ration was 169.4 applicants for every hundred jobs.

The office makes the situation look blacker by reporting that the little improvement noted since January was not due to more jobs being open but to fewer applicants, indicating that people got tired of looking in vain for a job or perhaps moved to other states in search of one. Fewer boys were looking for jobs in February than in January.

That bosses seem to have been cutting wages appears from the detailed report for Chicago where employment in factories increased 1% but payroll totals increased only a tenth as much. More than three times as many workers applied for jobs in Chicago in February than could be placed.

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ON SEATTLE: A CORRECTION

A comrade writes us from Seattle, correcting an error in No. 12 of the Militant.

"We have 17 cases. Two comrades got 60 days: \$50.00 fine, one got 30 days: \$50.00 and all others were fined \$25.00. All are out on appeal bond, their cases coming up next month. The 32 cases are the old ones from Armistice Day and are out on bonds. Now we have more cases, since they just pick up the boys for having a drink on 12th and Jackson Streets and for not working. I wonder why the Opposition is not taking a more active part in the I. L. D. We surely need them."—E.

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IN OUR NEXT NUMBER

Pressure of space compelled us to omit from this issue a number of very important articles. Our promised article on the developments within the British Labor Party will surely appear in the next issue. We will also have an analysis of the new group that has been formed in the Socialist Party in New York, the "younger" elements who obtained almost half the votes at the S. P. city convention. Then there is the introduction by comrade Trotsky to the American edition of his book "The Permanent Revolution", which will appear. Further, a reply to the Chinese "specialist" who hides behind the name R. Doonping, and who has written a particularly stupid article in the Communist "The Rising Revolutionary Wave and Trotsky Liquidation in China". Also an article by Max Shachtman on his recent visit to comrade Trotsky.

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By Max Eastman

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