

Are Walker and Lewis Going to Unite?

ILLINOIS MINERS

Howat and the Rank and File Movement

SPRINGFIELD—

Besides injunctions and more injunctions, court-room battles, street bouts, gun duels, slugging one another and local strikes among the Illinois miners, the most striking development is the various maneuvers of John Walker, the secretary-treasurer of the re-organized Miners Union. Like all self-seeking labor fakers, but more notoriously, Walker is dabbling and kowtowing with the most anti-union element of Illinois. Whether it is an American Legion banquet, a Chamber of Commerce meeting, Rotary Club dinner or some boss' political rally Walker is always conspicuous with his two large feet telling them what a great "labor leader" he is and how he has sacrificed and sacrificed and sacrificed for the Miners Union. The Miners call him "Weeping Jack." But there is a reason behind all of Walker's weeping. Walker has played the labor politician's game all his life and he still hopes to become a national figure.

It is only a few days ago that John Walker issued a statement to the American Federation of Labor convention at Boston, which read in part as follows:

"We will be glad to have the American Federation of Labor take any action that has for its purpose the bringing about a conference of the officials of both organizations to arrange for calling of a convention." (My emphasis).

Had the miners who are footing up the bills for the injunctions, lawyers and court costs anything to say about this statement? Is there any provision in the statement to have rank and file represented at the conference? Not at all. Everything is to be done by the officials of both organizations who have been hiring gunmen, fists and throwing verbal dynamite at each other for the last two years.

The Bureaucrats Unite

But Walker's statement is not the first time that this unity proposition sprouted out. During the recent Illinois Federation of Labor convention at Springfield, there were several locals of the re-organized Miners Union that sent delegates. When the question of seating these delegates came on the floor of the convention, Secretary Olander made the following announcement: "We came to an agreement with all parties involved not to seat the delegates from the re-organized locals of the Miners Union. We have done it so as not to create any bad feelings among those concerned. Because we hope to have both factions back with us in the near future." This was accepted by the delegates and even such "dead warriors" like John Hindmarsh who was a delegate from the re-organized union did not make a protest. Walker still had support in the Illinois Federation of Labor convention after the unseating of the miners delegates and if he were sincere in exposing John L. Lewis, this would have been a good time and place to do it. But, no, this could not be done or as Olander said, there had been an agreement reached.

Walker reads the handwriting on the wall. And that is why he is so active at the present time. He is playing a triple game. First, in case the miners put the boot to him, he will readily find a soft spot to land in the camp of the bosses. Second, trying in spite of everything, to become the outstanding miners leader and an "angel of peace" with the hope of becoming international president in place of Lewis and Howat at the fakers' unity convention. Third, he is running for the presidency of Illinois district, for which he not only has his flunkies busy working trying to capture the majority of the nominations to get at the head of the ballot, but also has the support of the Peabody Coal Co. mine guards: As for instance, in the Taylorville district where a Peabody mine guard walked into the local union meeting, put his gun on the table and told the members to nominate Walker for district president.

In the Miners' Rank and File

Will the rank and file miners agree to unite with the two sets of labor fakers or have John Walker for president of the re-organized Miners Union? The answer lies in which way the rank and file is moving and the situation on the Illinois mining fields.

In the Duquoin district the miners are working under the protection of mine

By JOSEPH ANGELO

guards, deputies and State Police. There one faction is trying to prevent the other faction from working. In Danville a similar situation prevails. Are the miners really doing this because they think that one faction is better than another? Not exactly. It is true that there are several local leaders that are bought and bribed by the one or the other faction and these flunkies are doing the bidding of their pay-masters. The rank and file miners see no hope in either faction and at the present time they are supporting the lesser of the two evils and wait for the opportune moment to rid themselves of both evils.

In the meantime the coal operators are reaping the harvest. Speed-ups, loading-machines, wages-cuts and worsening of conditions are the order of the day. In the Taylorville district, the Peabody mines are being guarded day and night by a herd of company gunmen, machine gun are being brought to the mine property and each miner is carefully scrutinized as he comes to work every day. (That is, every day the mine works, which is very few). There is no strike here, all belong to one faction. The coal-operators here are preparing more wage-cuts, because they think that they can use one faction against the other when the time comes.

Can Walker and Lewis unite the division in camp by any of their methods? The struggle has gone too far and the wounds too deep and now the whole struggle has simmered down to a fight against both officialdoms and only the rank and file movement can heal the wounds and unite the union.

The Position of Howat

What is the position of Alex Howat in regards to the present struggle? The Fishwick-Walkers and the remnants of Farrington are in complete control of the re-organized Miners Union at the present time. Due to the international constitution adopted at the Springfield convention the whole power of the international executive board lies in the hand of the district presidents. That is, the district presidents have one vote for each two thousands members. Thus, altho Fishwick is district president and Howat international president, Fishwick has twenty votes, to Howat's one. Howat still has the respect and confidence of the rank and file. The mass meetings of Howat's are attended by thousands of miners. At these meetings Howat has urged the necessity of militant policies, the election of rank and file officials, the reinstatement of all those expelled, unemployment insurance and a Labor Party.

At the Mt. Olive memorial meeting on October 11th, Howat replied to the unity compromise of Walker's by saying, "The re-organized Miners Union is more determined than ever to continue its fight against Lewis and his organization. The Lewis wing is a company union and a tool of the coal operators. If the coal operators asked Lewis for anything, they usually got it. Instead of begging from the bosses, the miners must organize a strong militant union." And in reply to one of Fishwick's attorneys that spoke at the meeting who told of what great suffering and sacrifices that Walker, Fishwick and Nesbit went thru, Howat said, "that it was not the officials that did the suffering and sacrificing. They were well paid for what they did. But it was the rank and file that did all the suffering and sacrificing and paying." The coming few months will again test Howat. The crack in the policies will either widen or close. Howat will either have to support the policy of the rank and file in deeds and not words, or the present officialdom. Howat must choose: either the Left wing miners and an open, clear fight on their side; or drifting along at the tail end of the Fishwick kite, and serving to cover up the faults of the "new union's" reactionary leadership. But regardless of where Howat chooses to go, the Left wing must rely on the miner's ranks.

In this whole struggle there is one hopeful spark and that is the development of the rank and file "educational bodies." The first educational body was formed at Staunton. Since then it has spread to Herrin, Pana and Springfield. They have adopted a broad militant policy, uniting

the progressive miners in both the Lewis and Fishwick union and carrying on educational work in both of the unions. Walker and Fishwick have already declared this a dual movement. These bodies are a healthy sign and they can be looked upon to play a big role in the future affairs of the Miners Union. They have already an important power, which is increasing right along. These rank and file movements are the cause of Walker and Lewis losing sleep and holding secret unity conferences. Will history repeat itself and Lewis and Walker unite as Lewis and Farrington did several years ago? The rank and file has other plans—plans which will put the

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fighting within the existing union!

The representatives of the broad Left wing group were once more compelled to speak. For hours they again argued against the false analysis and conclusions of the Industrial Union leaders on the subject of the so-called "company unions." But all to no avail. The Party decision had already been made. A phoney resolution was presented by the Party spokesman, and before any discussion could be had, it was jammed through with the aid of the Party's "packing." The resolution called for a committee to determine (after the weeks of discussion and work!) the nature of our work. The Left wing militants, not under Party discipline, refused to participate in this burlesque of a united front, and one by one declined membership on the committee. Thirteen Party and I. U. members were chosen, and thus ended the "united front" which is now being so widely advertised. No "social fascists," Lovestoneites, Trotskyites, or other non-kosher elements are to "contaminate" the committee.

Party's Arbitrariness

The whole situation spoke loudly of the fact that there is enormous vitality for the Left wing movement, and opportunities for real work. The Left wing workers in the main, understand the need of working unitedly with the whole Left wing movement and with the Party. They made every effort to work together so that prestige and strength would accrue to the Left wing and Communist movement. It was they who approached the Party, and sought united action. All the Party saw in this was a chance to "put something over."

The views of these militants, with years of experience in Left wing struggles, many of them former members of the T. U. E. L., men with standing among the workers, were coolly disregarded by the Party leaders, who thought to "rope them in," so to speak, by the cheap method of getting a mechanical majority in a packed meeting. The weeks of hard work merely demonstrated that the Party leaders will not yield from their untenable position, no matter what the requirements of the situation may be. "Either our line, or nothing."

Nevertheless, it would be a big mistake to stop the work begun by these militants, which was temporarily sidetracked by Party tactics. The position they took at the beginning remains sound: Work in the existing unions, collaborate with the organized Left wing, for unity of all the militants. The attempts by certain Lovestoneite elements to find an "easy road" for this movement by cutting it away from the official Left wing, have met with healthy and justified resistance from these militants who will not fight against the Communist movement but will help to redress its line and the line of the Left wing.

These workers are not taken in by the "simplified" Party theory of "company unions, which breeds passivity, sectarianism and defeatism. They are for a Left wing policy that will win the workers.

Organize the Left Wing!

The alternatives are not limited to either subjugation to the Party's false line, or no Left wing work at all. The Communist movement can and does transcend the stifling bounds of the Stalinist bureaucracy and Left wing militants can organize their work, and fight, without this bureaucracy if needs be, so long as they retain

Walkers, Lewises and others that go along with them where they rightfully belong.

In this whole gigantic struggle, where is the Stalinist Communist Party leadership? After all their glittering schemes, grand programs without ways and means for their accomplishment and wild plunges into ill-considered efforts, the "third period" chiefs enthusiastically greeted the miners by their absence. To-day, there is not a single Party unit functioning and Diogenes would need to look with a powerful microscope to find an active Stalinist.

It is due to the program and sober tactics of the Left Opposition that there is an awakening among the militant miners and a realization of the need for careful and substantial organizing of the Left wing in both of the Lewis and Fishwick unions and cutting a direct road past both officialdoms.

their contract with the bulk of the Left wing movement. The work of Left wing blockers in Local 42 amply illustrates that real work can be carried on in spite of Party muddling.

The urgent need now is that, on the basis of these experiences, there should be crystallized a broad Left wing movement, including all the militants in the industry for a struggle against the union bureaucracy, their capitalist masters, their class collaboration practices and theories, and for a class struggle policy and the unification of all the millinery workers. The immensity of the task demands bold and determined action. —S. M. ROSE.

New Seamen's «International»

HAMBURG—

There has just been held here a supposed International Seamen's and Dockers' Conference, and we are told that delegates present represented nearly half a million workers. After a lot of revolutionary talk it was decided to set up a revolutionary international of seamen and dockers.

Now we will all agree that such an international is wanted, but any one in close touch with the above conference will have arrived at only one conclusion, and that is, a real international of seamen and dockers can only be brought about by a conference of representatives from bona fide seamen and dockers organizations and not by a meeting of a few paid functionaries of the Communist Party, seamen's clubs and dockers' group.

At the above conference it was claimed that representatives were present from Germany, Britain, France, U. S. A., China, South America, etc., etc. One seemed to find it difficult, however, to discover what organizations they represented. Why all this mystery when five hundred thousand workers were represented, I don't know.

The star turn at the conference was the notorious George Hardy, who long ago became a back number in the States. We next hear of him as a big noise in the Minority Movement in Britain, but he ultimately suffered the same fate there. During the 1925 seamen's strike, Hardy tried to call it off in London while the samens were still on strike in Australia. And it's a good job for George, but a bad job for the movement, that the seaman didn't get hold of him, otherwise they would have dumped him in the dock.

Another interesting chapter in Hardy's history is his connection with the general strike in England. During the whole period of this strike, although he was the organizing secretary of the Minority Movement, George couldn't be found. (He was probably too busy fraternizing with Messrs. Purcell, Swales and Co. in the Anglo-Russian "Unity" Committee!—Ed.)

It was following this episode that Hardy was given the order of the boot. He now turns up here in Hamburg as the president of the seamen's and Dockers' International. As delegates were present at this conference from the U. S. A., it would be interesting to learn what seamen's and dockers' organization they represented and what voting power they carried numerically. RED SEAMAN.

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