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Illinois Mine Workers in Revolt

What Has Happened in Illinois?

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SPRINGFIELD, ILL.—

The compromise and the capitulation between the Lewis and the Fishwick-Walker factions in the Miner's Union is neither surprising (see my article, *Militant*, Nov. 15, 1930) nor is it anything new in the affairs of the miners' union. The compromise enriches the arsenal of the rank and file and will unquestionably result in a struggle for the formation of a new miners' union.

Both the Lewis and Fishwick-Walker factions "blame" Judge Edwards' decision as the reason for the cessation of the sham warfare. Yet, the facts and action speak louder than the lips of these self-confessed labor fakers. It was the attorneys hired by the Lewis and Fishwick-Walker factions that prepared a written decision in line with Judge Edwards' pronouncements and which the Judge signed. Judge Edwards was merely a puppet of the Lewis-Fishwick-Walker faction when he signed the lawyers' decree which stipulated that the injunction of Fishwick-Walker against Lewis be made permanent . . . that Lewis' union and constitution is the "only United Mine Workers union" . . . that district dues must be paid to Walker and the international dues to Lewis, etc. Everybody knows that Pres. Green of the A. F. of L. was in Springfield at the time of the last trial and that both Walker and Lewis had conferences with him, from which resulted the decision that the Judge made. Again, immediately after the oral decision made by the Judge in Springfield, both Lewis and Walker left for Washington, D. C., where undoubtedly together with Green the compromise was further perfected to be presented to the Chicago conference. The reason for "blaming" the Judge who carried out their plans is to soothe the rising militancy of the rank and file miners and then shove the Lewis-Walker union down their throats.

As soon as the rank and file miners heard about the compromise between the labor-fakers, they went into motion rapidly. According to official report 6,700 miners stopped paying dues to Fishwick the first week of compromise. Since then, one local after another has stopped paying dues to both Lewis and Fishwick. Today, there are hardly a dozen locals in Illinois that are sending dues to either Lewis or Fishwick. Not only does the rising revolt of the miners express itself against the labor fakers in the stoppage of dues, but against the coal operators as well. The picketing of mines, fighting for a division of work and burning of railroad bridges near the mines in West Frankfort and the three thousand mine pickets on three mines that tried to lower the wages in Belleville show that the miners have lost hope, as far as the official fakers are concerned, to settle their grievances. Therefore, the rank and file miners are attempting to settle their grievances themselves. The compromise has aroused tremendous anger among the rank and file which will express itself in many local strikes for better conditions and against any wage-cuts in Illinois.

Immediately after the compromise was made the adherents of the Howat faction who were left in the cold to shift for themselves, together with the Muste group called a conference in St. Louis for the purpose of organizing a new international union. It was decided to call the convention in St. Louis on April 15th. It calls upon the rank and file to organize a militant rank and file union, stresses the organization of the unorganized and doing away with Lewis bossism, yet it is a weak-kneed document—typical of the Muste-Howat group. It does not even openly attack its erstwhile friends—the Walkers, Fishwicks, etc.

The position of Howat is far from satisfactory to any Left winger. Since the agreement between Lewis and Walker, Howat has not uttered one syllable openly against either Walker or Fishwick who have

gone back into the Lewis organization after spending hundreds of thousands of the miners' hard-earned dollars. Howat has not told the miners of Illinois why Fishwick and Walker kept such Left wingers as Morgan and Leech of Staunton, and Besson of Taylorville off the ballot at the last election of the re-organized miners' union. The rank and file miners, especially the Left wing, must insist that no doors be left open for Walker, Fishwick, etc., at the convention called in St. Louis.

There is no doubt that the position of Oscar Ameringer in calling for a district convention, as outlined in the last two issues (Continued on page 8)

Rank and File Rebel Against Fishwick-Lewis Agreement; New Union Call Issued

Once again a scoundrel's agreement has been made in the Illinois mine fields. The John L. Lewis and Fishwick-Walker cliques, with all their big and petty officials, have settled their little "differences" and agreed upon the place for each to take around the flesh pots.

Significantly enough this agreement was reached, signed and sealed in a capitalist court. The Fishwick-Walker combine is divorced from the so-called reorganized U.

M. W. It has become the recognized Illinois district administration. Lewis withdraws his provisional officers from the district and is recognized as the head of the U. M. W. of A.—that is, whatever is left of it. And then, in an effort to prevent the expected wrath of the rank and file membership to become crystallized in an actual rebellion, the attorney in charge of this agreement, J. Londrigan, denounces any contemplated convention as "an act of secession and an open attempt to form a dual organization."

The rank and file membership will now be expected to pay the enormous bills of a court litigation between these two cliques which began Oct. 1929. They will be expected to pay continued royalties to these mercenary officials who have been leaving behind them a trail of wreckage of a once splendid organization and of miners' homes forced down to the lowest point of degradation. The bills are expected to be paid through the check-off from miners' wages collected by the operators. The latter are to get their share of the reward of the spoils to accrue from the agreement through increased profits derived by further lowering of the miserable conditions of the miners.

Will matters pan out as these thieves contemplate? Hardly—Discontent is now seething, a rank and file revolt movement is on foot. Staunton has become the stronghold of the rebellious forces. Shortly after the consummation of the agreement, 300 coal miners from several points in Illinois met in Staunton, denounced the agreement, and decided upon the calling of a special convention. This to be held in St. Louis on April 15. Clearly enough there can be no alternative for this movement to consider seriously except a complete break with the corrupt officials and their whole line of policy of treason.

One year ago, on March 10, a widespread, healthy miners' rebellion was frustrated and harnessed into delusive channels. The revolt was a healthy one in the sense that it strove already then for a complete break with John L. Lewis and the whole tradition of his corrupt administration. It was, however, capitalized by the Fishwick-Walker-Farrington combine, who, with their whole string of rapacious petty officials, succeeded in turning this movement into one for personal spoils. To make such complete diversion of a healthy rebellious movement possible this combine cleverly utilized the "progressive" front of Howat, Brophy, Hapgood and others. Howat, despite his long experience with the corrupt officialdom of the U. M. W. of A., allied himself with these old hands at the game of treason. Previously he had been an ally of the Communists and genuine Left wing forces but the weakened condition reached by the latter through a continuous blunder policy made possible the backsliding of Howat. He no longer needed any such alliances. The result of this period since the beginning of the rebellion a year ago, in which Howat played such a miserable role, are now epitomized in the sell-out agreement. It becomes a powerful object lesson of what the road of reformism actually leads to.

Alexander Howat, who was eased out of his office by the Lewis-Fishwick-Walker agreement, has now with the other Muste type of "leaders", become one of the active sponsors of the present rebellion. A warning must be issued against this type of "leaders" who during the whole existence of the so-called reorganized U. M. W. of A. failed to fight the contemplated treason of the Fishwick-Walker administration. Thus they played the game of stalking horses for the reactionaries, being in the Fishwick camp one day only to return to the camp of other reactionaries a while later. The miners will win out if they rely on their own class strength.

(Continued on page 4)



A photograph of comrade Leon Trotsky at his work-desk in Prinkipo, taken a short time before the fire broke out which burned down his home, destroying his library and many other valuable material.

Help Rebuild Trotsky's Library!

Authoritative reports from Prinkipo confirm in all their essentials the dispatches of recent date in the capitalist press concerning the fire which destroyed the home of comrade Trotsky in his island exile. By rare good fortune, the manuscript of the history of the Russian revolution which he is completing, an invaluable file of correspondence with Lenin, and a number of other documents were rescued from the flames. But the entire library of comrade Trotsky was destroyed, not to speak of many other personal effects.

The exact cause of the conflagration has not yet been established. Whether it was accidental, or due to the dastardly efforts of a Stalinist hireling—and the whole past of Stalin's persecution of the Opposition in general and Trotsky in particular makes the latter alternative not at all inconceivable—is not yet known. But in any case, the destruction of his library has placed the greatest handicaps upon comrade Trotsky and his work as the leader of the International Left Opposition (Bolshevik-Leninists). Laboring under the difficulties of his Turkish exile—imposed upon him by the united front of Stalin, Kemal Pasha and the rulers of "democratic" Europe—has been an enormous hindrance in the recent past. The fire has multiplied the difficulties a hundred fold.

The assistance of every revolutionist, in every part of the world, is imperatively needed now to overcome these difficulties as much as possible. The International Secretariat of the Left Opposition has launched an appeal to all militants to help restore the library of comrade Trotsky. This can be done in two ways: (1) send all the books

you can, books by Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky written in Russian, German, French or English, or books on subjects related to their work (History, economics, sociology, etc.), to the headquarters of the Communist League of America, at 84 East 10th Street, so that they may be forwarded immediately to comrade Trotsky in Turkey; (2) send all the money you can afford for an international fund which is being collected for the same purpose. All moneys will be strictly accounted for, and sent immediately to the International Secretariat in Paris. Make all checks and money orders payable to The Militant, 84 East 10th Street, New York, N. Y.

We urge all our friends and supporters to act upon this matter immediately. The need is great. The response must be equal to it. Help restore the library of the gifted leader of the International Left Opposition, Leon Trotsky.

N. Y. OPEN FORUM

April 4: THE CRISIS IN THE NEEDLE TRADES

By James P. Cannon

at the

LABOR TEMPLE

14th Street and Second Avenue

Open at 8 P. M.

Admission: 25c

Auspices: New York branch, Communist League of America (Opposition).