

ON THE WORKERS' FRONT

Rank and File Struggle in the New York Carpenters' Union

With Greater New York having 32 local unions, of the carpenters' organization, it is looked upon as a sort of barometer of that organization, and therefore, besides its own problems, is often confronted with problems concerning the organization as a whole. By this I mean that measures aimed to come up for adoption will usually be tried out in the New York District before they are known in other vicinities. And so it happened on Oct. 8 1930. The N. Y. Dist. Council, on a roll call vote, adopted a motion which if enforced would compel every member in the Metropolitan Dist. to have his photograph on his working card. This was bolstered up with the pretense of making it impossible for any member to loan his card to non-union men.

A Reactionary Proposal

Hereupon L. U. 2090 got busy and elected a committee which went before various Locals in N. Y. and drew their attention to the dangerous effect this photo would have on members participating on picket-lines or belonging to any political organization; that it would furnish the police, the Immigration Bureau, as well as the Dept. of Justice, with direct and immediate identification, that it would positively lead to having many of our best members thrown into jail, if not deported etc. Thus our organization with its foolish rulings would unconsciously play in the hands of the police and the bosses. It further pointed out that the action by the D. C. was illegal, for the fact that such steps are a permanent rule necessitates the amending of the D. C. by-laws; this must be done through a referendum vote in order to comply with the laws of the general constitution of our organization. Proceeding from that, the result was that many locals appealed to the First Vice-President of the organization, who found himself compelled to disapprove the action of the D. C.

But what was most important of all was that out of this the Committee itself has learned its power, by the use of united action, and on Jan. 3, 1931 was reorganized as the Emergency Committee. It was first officially represented by two and is now officially represented by five locals. It issued over five thousand leaflets. Its demands are 6-hours a day, 5-day week, division of work, shop and job control by locals, etc. (With these demands the Emergency Committee appeared on the floor of twelve locals in some cases twice or three times, in order to achieve its point. On Feb. 2, a visit was made to Local 608. When the loyal supporters of the D. C. denied the committee the floor to speak the committee decided to revisit that local.

The meantime, contact was made with few of their members in the day-room on Feb. 9, when the committee reappeared before Local 608 the chairman as compelled by vote of the membership to grant the floor to Holtkamp, a member of the committee. Two weeks later, Holtkamp was notified by the D. C. Trial Board that charges were brought against him by the chairman of U. 608 for bringing dissension among membership of his local union and criticizing the D. C. officers. He was led to appear before the D. C. Trial Board on March 27, 1931. In the meantime, Local 2090 took upon itself the sole responsibility for what Holtkamp and the committee were charged with, and instead of Holtkamp alone, a committee of eight, some unofficially, representing four local unions appeared with him as witnesses before the Trial Board. All were heard, but to this date no decision has been rendered.

Towards Mass Demonstrations

On April 4, a resolution, demanding the D. C. to call a conference of five rank and file members of each local to discuss equal distribution of work, was drawn up and sent through Local 1164 to every local in the Metropolitan District. Of these locals unions, eleven of them submitted their resolution before the D. C. but instead of being acted upon the D. C. placed them on file. Our next step will be to work towards a mass demonstration by at least the eleven locals who signed the resolution compelling the D. C. to act upon them.

Now as to the Carpenters Section of the Building & Construction Workers Industrial League affiliated with the T. U. U. L. Who are they? We don't have to give you their trade mark. Their leaflet, their action will bear them out. As to the claims with which they credit themselves in their election circulars, they will find a much better reception a few thousand miles away from New York, than right here in their own L. J. Their leaflet says the Emergency Committee believes in no politics in the union. That is false. No one of us is a holder of a free trip to Moscow by the Stalinist regime. But what we do say is this: the workers are able to tell whether politics are played in the interest of the workers or the boss, they should study them first.

Seven or Six Hour Day?

But that is not all which confuses us while in their leaflets only yesterday accused us of standing for no politics in the union, which of course is true, the T. U. U. L. in the needle des has really adopted that very gas (no politics in the union, without explanation. The Emergency Committee not altogether ignorant in politics, and against any elements swamping

them, adopted a ruling that only three members from any L. U. are allowed to vote. This was already in effect before anyone of the T. U. U. L. had come in contact with us. The official representation then was eight members. The members of the T. U. U. L. had met with us about three times but did not attend very regularly. In the meantime our resolution on the 6-hour day was in the press and, at their re-appearance, we were asked by them to withdraw the resolution and have it substituted by a 7-hour day! This we could not do because we are of the opinion that the 7-hour day would not bring much relief, with so many men out of work. Then we were asked to increase the representation from three to ten. This we also could not do because out of the three locals represented, two were not able at that time to increase their representation on account of such representation being made up of voluntary members. So they withdrew. Their next step was to put up something in opposition to us, so they organized an Open Forum, which was held on March 1, at 143 E. 103rd St. with Morris Rosen as speaker, and in spite of their bragging of 1500 members in the B. S. W. L. L. they were not able to mobilize more than forty of whom about one third were adherents of the Emergency Committee.

Lessons for the T. U. U. L.

Our last election in L. U. 2090 should have taught them a lesson if they are still in a position to do their own thinking. Last year the T. U. U. L. had seven candidates elected in Local 2090. Six months later, five of them left the T. U. U. L. At this June election they got on the platform and denounced the whole organization which did not exclude the rank and file, by whom, ten minutes later, they expected to be elected. The result was that they elected two this year, against seven twelve months ago. In analyzing the activity and policy of the T. U. U. L. they are bound to drift into complete sectarianism if not a complete collapse, because of their total isolation from the workers. For instance, along in March it was disclosed that in certain shops under the jurisdiction of Local 2090 and Local 1164 there were over forty men working at the rate of from five to eleven dollars per day. The complaint was made to the D. C. The council took action and recovered two weeks, for each man the difference between \$5-\$11 and \$13.20 back wages. The council failed to penalize by not removing these men and replace them with new men. The question came up before the above two locals, which voted to organize a joint protest demonstration before the office of the D. C., but since this demonstration was not started by the T. U. U. L. or any of its members (who claim sole patent rights on all demon-

Auto Workers Reject a Cut

In this time of economic depression and widespread surrender on the part of the workers to the bosses' campaign of wage-cutting, it is encouraging to find a labor union still militant enough to refuse to allow its members to accept such a cut. At the last meeting of the Automobile and Vehicle Workers' Union here in New York, the chairman of a committee representing the workers in the largest auto body shop in New York (said chairman, by the way, being a member of the Communist League of America) announced that the men in his shop had been asked by their employer to take a 15 percent reduction in their wages.

The immediate reaction of the membership was to denounce the proposal and a number of members took the floor and expressed bitter resentment against it. When the vote was finally taken, it proved to be 100 percent against accepting the cut.

This organization, once a powerful Left wing union, the leadership of which was in the hands of the Communist party, has for the last three or four years been steadily losing in membership, and its prestige as a fighting union has suffered a decline. When, in 1928, the union affiliated with the A. F. of L. the Communist party members of the union adopted the policy of the party leaders and dropped out of the organization—not with the intention of forming a new union, but solely because of the childish attitude, "if we can't have things our way, we won't play." Without, apparently any doubts on the wisdom of their action, they thus left to the labor fakers the leadership of several hundred workers.

In the whole organization only one Communist—a member of the Communist League—was left to carry on the fight for a militant union. He succeeded in convincing two other members of the union that the policy of the Communist League was correct, and with their help set to work to win back the ground that had been lost by the action of the Communist party deserters. Slowly but surely his efforts began to tell. The union will shortly start a determined organization drive, and due to the general dissatisfaction among auto workers in the city, there is every reason to expect that the union will regain its former strength.

—GADFLY.

strations) they fought the issue and did all they could to offset it. In spite of all their work, the demonstration of about three hundred took place. It did not bring great results but considering the facts, it was the only body ever heard of to raise a voice of protest against the action of the bureaucrats in the B. C. & J. A.

—W.H.H.

The Background of the Coal Strike

No matter what book or treatise on the world's great industries or commodities one were to pick up, there would be included in a position of importance that of bituminous coal. And properly so. More than all other sources combined, soft coal was the chief source for the production of power and heat during even the past few years, in spite of the rapid strides made recently by oil and water power. And looked at from the point of view of the coal industry alone—bituminous is the predominant factor as compared to anthracite. Only about 10 to 15 percent of the coal produced in this country is anthracite and the production of this hard coal is confined to the region in northeastern Pennsylvania located around Scranton. Bituminous plays the predominant rôle from the point of view of total production, of importance in industry (about 70 percent of the anthracite is used in the home—bituminous plays its rôle in the steel mill, in the power plant, and on the railroad), of area of product and of total men employed. Also, it gains major attention at the present time from the completely demoralized condition of the industry as compared to the anthracite field.

No matter what major industry one concerns himself with at the present time, he will always be confronted with the contradiction between the "capacity for production" and the actual production. Bituminous coal is no exception. There are certain industries in which one cannot speak of actual overproduction. In these industries production is merely "on order". The major part of the steel industry is a good example of the above. Soft coal production comes into this category too. To attempt to analyze the bituminous industry from the point of view of actual overproduction would get one nowhere. There is strictly speaking no actual overproduction of coal for any length of time. The source for the difficulties of the industry lies not in the actual overproduction but in the growing disproportion between capacity for production and actual production.

Prior to the war the expansion of the bituminous mining industry was greater than that of American industry as a whole. This rate of expansion received the added impetus of the war years, years of great demand. Under such circumstances the problem before the indus-

try was that of expanding its capacity rapidly enough to meet the increasing demand. The war left the industry with a capacity much above the needs of the normal market.

The years since the war have been properly considered the years of unprecedented mechanization, of rationalization for American industry as a whole. The bituminous coal industry is not excluded. "Mine mechanization" has gone on apace. As compared to 1918 underground haulage is now largely mechanical. The percentage undercut by hand has declined from 23.8 percent in 1918 to 14.2 percent in 1928. Mechanical loaders were not in use in 1918. No large mine at present would conceive of loading by hand. According to C. J. Bockus, President of the National Coal Association "the adoption of mechanical devices is reflected in the fact that between 1918 and 1928 the average output per day per man employed increased from 3.78 tons to 4.73 tons, a gain of 25 percent." For 1929 and 1930 this increase is much greater since these were the years over 50 percent increase in the use of mechanical loaders. Of course, this increase of 25 percent per man for the industry as a whole, means for those mines which are highly mechanized an increase per day per man many times the above 25 percent—and the mines in the Pittsburgh region, particularly those of the Pittsburgh Terminal Coal Co. are included in that group of "highly mechanized". He concludes the above paragraph in his contribution to "The Menace of Overproduction" with the sentence: "The influence of mechanical loaders upon output per man has only begun to be felt."

In addition to the increase in capacity caused by mechanization there is that caused by lateral expansion of the industry. New mines are being constantly opened, new fields exploited aside from which many mines already being worked are enlarged. The large capacity existing at the end of the war coupled with that of lateral expansion and that caused by mechanization gives to the U. S. at the present time, as estimated by the U. S. Bureau of Mines a total capacity of between 750,000,000 and 800,000,000 tons per year.

Actual production and consumption however remains far below this figure.

Hillman's New Racket - The «Campaign» Against Racketeering

(Continued from page 1)

the union? Who is the enemy that, in the words of Hillman, has in the last seven years undermined the peaceful relations between the union and the manufacturers, taken hold in our industry and challenged that they "will share in the union government or will do away with the union officers"?

The Daily News Record, official organ of the clothing manufacturers, gives an answer to this question in a series of talks on the situation in the industry. It points to the racketeers in the A.C.W. whom Hillman has in mind but is not ready for strategic reasons to mention openly. These racketeers are the officials of the Cutters' Union, Local 4, under the leadership of Ph. Orlofsky who have always defied and interfered in the plans of the organization to unionize the market, and engaged in racketeering. These officials are the ones whom Hillman is determined to clean out of the union, and this campaign is a continuation of the one launched by Hillman a couple of years ago and which was suspended by him for strategic reasons because Orlofsky's position was too strong at that time.

The challenge made by cutters' officials either to refute or confirm prevalent rumors and references in regard to the racketeers in the union. Hillman refused to answer. To a rank and file committee of the cutters' local who offered Hillman their support in his house-cleaning of their local, Hillman declined to disclose the names of the officials involved in the racketeering practices and rejected with contempt their cooperation offered him in his campaign.

Who Are the Racketeers?

Who then are the racketeers and what connection is there between Hillman's campaign and the contemplated "general strike" in the New York market? After a careful examination of all this mess of statements and declarations in the trade, union and general press by all parties involved, one cannot but draw the only logical conclusion in regard to the campaign launched by Hillman against racketeering and his program of a general strike: Hillman is performing one of his usual publicity stunts and is maneuvering a new betrayal of the A. C. W. membership in the coming renewal of the agreement with the clothing manufacturers, distracting their attention from their real problems and preventing a real house-cleaning of racketeering in the union by the members themselves. How did racketeering find its way into the industry when, according to Hillman, mutual relations between the union and the manufacturers were satisfactory to all concerned and law and order reigned supreme? In whose interest was it to bring in this plague that is "ruining the industry" and causing unemploy-

ment and misery to thousands of workers? Why does Hillman evade mention of the causes of this phenomenon in the New York market? Why does Hillman reject the cooperation of the rank and file of the membership in his so-called fight against this evil?

Hillman traces the beginning of racketeering in the industry back to the year 1924. Is it a mere coincidence that in that year Hillman's campaign against the Left wing in the A. C. W. and Beckerman's underworld rule in the New York organization was inaugurated by Hillman? How does Hillman read his own history? Was not Hillman the one that enthroned the underworld chieftains in the Joint Board and gave his blessings to the terror and gangster methods in the cutters' local which have reigned up till recently when the membership has finally risen in protest against them? Was not Hillman's aim at that time to enforce "law and order" and piece-work for the tailors and low costs of production for the manufacturers?

What has happened since? What has caused this change of mind in Hillman? Is he longing for the old system of law and order when the membership had enjoyed the benefits of organization and the Hillmans had to cover themselves with radical phrases and pretend allegiance to the class struggle? Hillman has made it clear that this is not his object. He does not intend to improve the conditions of the tailors in New York, which are unbearable to the extreme and for which he is responsible. He is not out to clean the organization of the Beckermans and Orlofskys for the benefit of the membership. He did not bring these racketeers into the union to benefit the membership and will not remove them for that purpose. Hillman is squaring his own accounts with his competitors in the racketeering game in which they are all engaged as officers of the A. C. W. concern and agents of the clothing manufacturers. Hillman, in this campaign, is pursuing the aims of the clothing manufacturers. It is sufficient to glance through the articles in the Daily News Record written on the situation and the statements made by C. D. Jaffe, president of the Clothiers Exchange to reach this conclusion.

Bosses with Hillman

The Daily News Record definitely sides with Hillman in his campaign against the officials of the cutters local, not because of the racketeering practices of those officials but because it wishes to see the "aristocratic" cutters whipped in line by Hillman with the rest of clothing workers who are the majority in the industry and have submitted to lower standards and worse conditions in the shops. The manufacturers' organ is working hand in glove with Hillman in their common aim to efficiency-unionize the industry.

C. D. Jaffe had this to say on the situa-

tion: "No one need regret joining the union in any constructive effort to build up this market and cleanse it of its underworld element. We need a strong, not a weak union, and I do not believe in vacillating on this point. The collective bargaining agreements have conclusively proven to the retailer throughout that they need have no fears of strikes or lockouts, or excessive costs in the market."

The remarkable unity of aims and identity of language between Hillman and the clothing manufacturers are revealed in the above quotation from the manufacturers' mouthpieces. But these are shown still more clearly in their concerted actions. At the conferences with Mayor Walker and his committee Hillman and the representatives of the Clothiers Exchange appeared together as one body and pleaded for protection of their common interests in the coming strike. Both parties are then engaged in the campaign launched by Hillman to "improve" the conditions of the underpaid tailors and both are concerned in the "house-cleaning" of the Amalgamated. They both have one objective: to promote the manufacture of men's clothing in New York through establishing low costs of production at the expense of the clothing workers. Hillman is the spokesman of the manufacturers in this as in every other campaign of the A. C. W. The talk of a general strike and a fight against racketeering is only a smoke screen to blind the union membership to the work of betrayal Hillman is out to perform. The members know it and have expressed their opinion about it at their meetings. They will also aspire to act and fight against this betrayal.

As far as the evil of racketeering and gangsterism is concerned, the A. C. W. members are convinced that this plague can only be eliminated by their own effort, in struggle against the corrupt officialdom in the local unions who are maintained by Hillman and are the connecting link between the union and the underworld and in many cases represent the underworld in their own person. Hillman cannot and will not eliminate them without the risk of losing his control over the organization, and this he is not expected to do.

A Real Challenge

The real challenge to racketeering must come from the rank and file of the union membership. A real general strike for the improvement of conditions can only be undertaken by the membership, not on the initiative of the manufacturers and their agent, Sidney Hillman, against whom it should be directed. Hillman has not launched his campaign for these aims. He is in the A. C. W. to serve the bosses and his own interests. This campaign for the so-called general strike and against racketeering have once more proved it. The A. C. W. membership will benefit by this experience added to the many gone through by them in the past. Their struggle against their betrayers will be so much more intense and will bring victory so much nearer.

—ALBERT ORLAND.

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